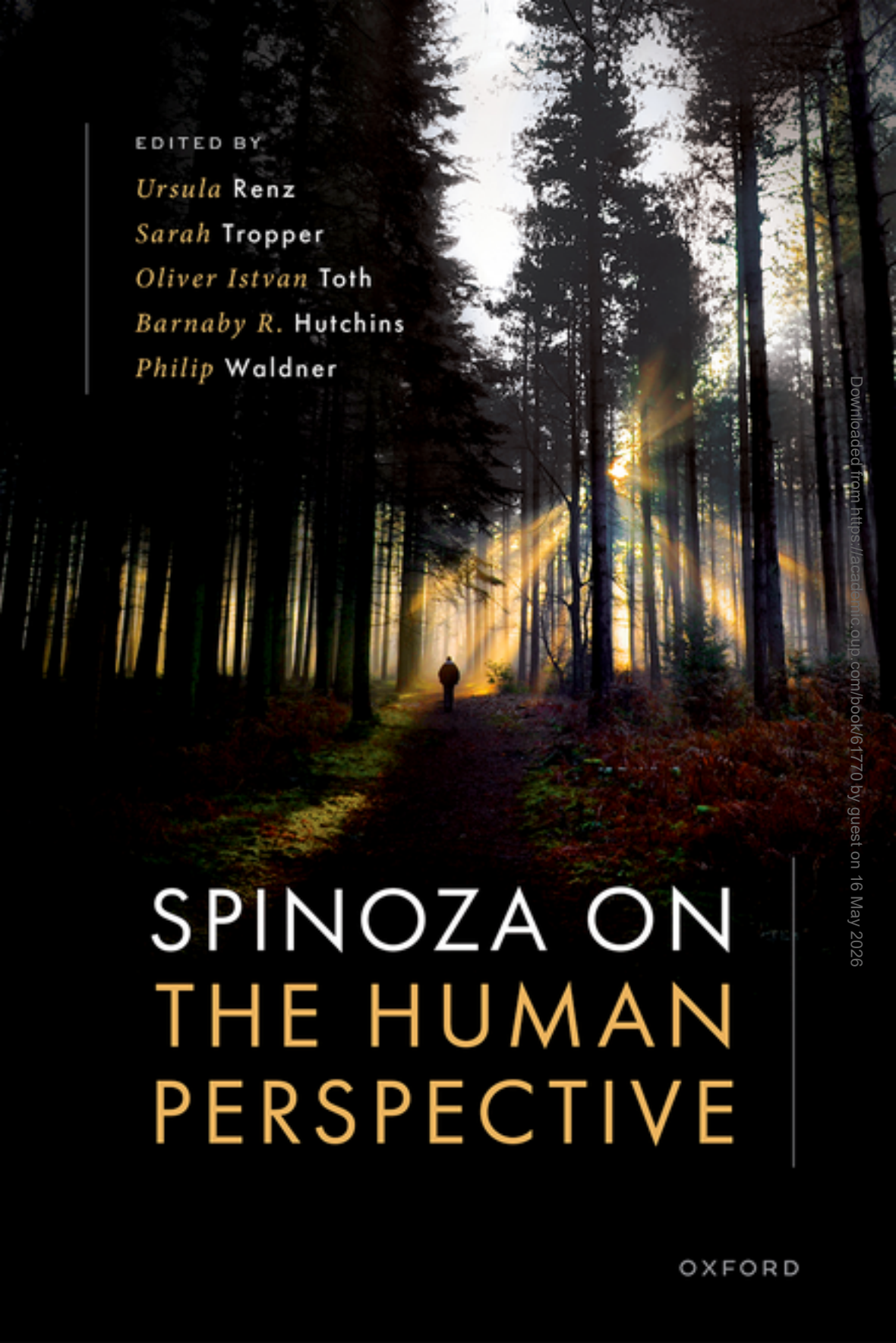

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Spinoza on the Human Perspective

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Abbreviations

Spinoza:

C	*The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 2 volumes, transl. and ed. by Edwin Curley (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1985–2016); referenced by volume and page number
G	*Spinoza Opera*, 4 volumes, ed. by Carl Gebhardt (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1925); referenced by volume and page number
E	*Ethica/Ethics*; abbreviations within the *Ethics* are: a = axiom app = appendix c = corollary da = definition of the affects def = definition dem = demonstration ex = explanation lem = lemma p = proposition p = postulate pref = preface s = scholium (e.g. E3p57s is *Ethics*, Part 3, Proposition 57, Scholium)
CM	*Cogitata Metaphysica/Metaphysical Thoughts*
Ep.	*Epistola/Letter*
KV	*Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch, en deszelfs Welstand/Short Treatise on God, Man, and his Well-Being)*
PPC	*Principia Philosophiae Cartesianae/Principles of Descartes's Philosophy*
TIE	*Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione/Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*
TP	*Tractatus Politicus/Political Treatise*
TTP	*Tractatus Theologico-Politicus/Theological-Political Treatise*

Descartes:

AT	*Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, 11 volumes, Paris: Vrin (1964–1974), referenced by volume and page number.
CSM 1	*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume 1*, transl. by John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch.
CSM 2	*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume 2*, transl. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch.
CSMK	*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, Volume 3*, transl. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny.

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Introduction

Spinoza's Multifaceted Concern with Human Life

Ursula Renz, Barnaby R. Hutchins, Oliver Istvan Toth, Sarah Tropper, Philip Waldner

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Spinoza's philosophy is, in a puzzling way, marked by a fundamental division between two views on human life. On the one hand, the *Ethics* confronts us with a concept of being, which, when taken seriously, seems to undermine the very idea of multiplicity. Understood in this way, such a concept would not only result in a view in which the universe is devoid of all particulars, but also in the denial of all features of reality that are usually taken to be fundamental to the human condition and to our experience, such as subjectivity or perspectivity, temporality, and emotional salience. On the other hand, in much of his work, including the later parts of the *Ethics*, Spinoza addresses questions that only arise from within a human perspective. Given that these questions express the concerns of humans (some of which are rather pressing), it may be suggested that their very existence—their existence as problems, that is, their 'problematicity'—is conditional on there existing at least one subject for whom having a particular viewpoint is essential.

That there is such a thing as 'perspective' and, moreover, that humans tend to look at things from a stance that is in some sense typical of their kind is thus central to Spinoza's philosophy. Arguably, many of the problems his philosophy addresses exist in merely conditional or relational ways; they have a relative ontological status: they are real in virtue of a subject's taking them as real. Still, whatever is a concern for people evidently constitutes a worthy object of philosophical reflection and inquiry for Spinoza. Indeed, he explicitly subscribes to this view, when he writes in the *Metaphysical Thoughts* that "many [. . .] things are good, which are not good for all. So salvation is good for men, but neither good nor bad for animals or plants to which it has no relation" (C 1:313/G 2:247).

Although this concern with problems arising from or within human life is patent in Spinoza, it is only recently that scholars have begun to take this facet of his thought to be of comparable significance to his interest in a metaphysical discussion of substance or God, or of those features of reality characterizing divine being. It is the aim of this book to draw attention to some of those parts of Spinoza's philosophy where he is explicitly engaged in a reflection on human life or some

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peculiarity of it. As a matter of fact, the ideas of humanity and of the human perspective are cornerstones for several key dimensions of Spinoza's thought.

1. There is, to begin with, *the problem of morality*, or of *the status of normative claims.* Although, in Part One of the *Ethics*, Spinoza merely discusses those ontological features of reality that qualify nature as a whole, and although he arrives at conclusions that deprive the notion of final ends of any reality and causal power (outside the human mind), he is nonetheless keen on establishing an ethical theory (C 1:442). That is, he sets out to derive a rationally grounded doctrine of what is good—not what is good *as such*, but what is good for us as human beings. Thus, whereas Spinoza discards the notion that things exist that are good as such, he does stick with the assumption that some things are good for humans, and that they are so in a general and in a reliable manner. This assumption is established in the definitions and first few propositions of Part Four, where Spinoza's metaethical notions are spelt out and discussed. Furthermore, he grounds the very possibility of such metaethical nomenclature in an appeal to the idea of a model of human nature, voiced in the preface to this Part. Despite its seemingly fictional character, this model makes room for a justification of general claims of both what is good *for* humans and what is good *in* or *about* them.
2. Relatedly, there is also *the problem of modality.* It is often assumed that Spinoza adopts a strict necessitarianism, according to which all existing beings and all obtaining facts exist and obtain *necessarily*. In addition, this is not taken to preclude only the intelligibility of the notion of contingent objects, but the intelligibility of all possible beings. It may seem, against this background, that any reflection on our own lives in terms of possibility is entirely misguided and futile. However, if we take the idea seriously that a model of human nature can be established, then there is a way of looking at the lives of individual humans in terms of the perfections that they could or may realize. This shows that there is conceptional space to think of human life in terms of our options, and this way of thinking about life is, however fictional its status, important for us, as it is what allows us to consciously strive for that which we take to be good for us and to provide us with enduring happiness.
3. Another facet of Spinoza's concern with humans is revealed by the observation that, in the course of his work, he voices quite a few anthropological claims. While some of these claims are anthropological only by implication, it happens also frequently that Spinoza speaks explicitly of humans. In the preamble to Part Two, for example, he mentions that he is passing over those things that "can lead us [. . .] to the knowledge of the *human* mind" (C 1: 446/G 2:84; our emphasis). Likewise, in the preface to Part Three, he contrasts his treatment of the affects with those who "have written about the affects, and *men's* way of living" (C 1:491/G 2:137; our emphasis), as if they did not

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"follow the common laws of nature", but constituted "things which are outside nature" (ibid.). Here, he explicitly talks of the *human* mind and of *people's* affective life; correspondingly, he often employs phrases such as 'human mind', 'human body', etc., in these parts. This might seem to pose several problems: following Spinoza's treatment of universals, strictly speaking, there simply cannot be any such thing as a human nature, a specifically human lifeform or way of life, or a human species. That said, it is remarkable how often Spinoza employs these terms and how often he voices views that one cannot but call anthropological. Taking this seriously, we must also assume that he allows for a conceptualization of the term 'human' in a more-or-less reliable, generalizable manner.

4. Spinoza's concern with human life is more than the upshot of abstract theorizing: it results from a deep concern with the very issues that arise in the course of human life. This is made especially evident by the focus in the *Tractatus Politicus* and the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* on topics that are clearly and explicitly of interest from a human perspective. They deal with *politics* or those kinds of issues that only exist for beings engaged and engaging in political activities. As can be seen from a close reading of several chapters of Spinoza's political theory, he was fully aware that both political problems and the means to cope with them arise specifically from the way in which people are and behave. Were the universe to be reduced to one singular divine subject, there would be no individual subjects to stand in relations of conflicts of interests to others. There would be no quarrel for resources, no struggle for domination over others, no controversies of opinions, etc. Likewise, there would be no institutions, no laws, no governance or rulership—there would be no attempt to institutionalize the communal life of people in a more-or-less rational and autonomous manner, precisely because there would be no people.

Perhaps, there are more dimensions of Spinoza's thought that prove him to be what he has frequently been denied being: a humanist thinker, or a philosopher of human life who theorizes on humanity from within the human viewpoint.

The chapters assembled in this volume demonstrate and substantiate Spinoza's concern with human life, his focus on the human perspective, and his interest in issues arising from this stance in various facets of his thoughts. One significant aspect in this regard is the question of how to think about human individuals within Spinoza's metaphysical system in the first place. Michael LeBuffe opens this debate by arguing that the role of the Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles is of ultimate importance, as its consideration allows us to solve several of the puzzles mentioned, in particular the tension between the metaphysical primacy of the individual and the exemplar of human nature. According to LeBuffe, if we apply this principle, as it is used in E1p5dem to demonstrate that all individuals differ

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essentially, to later discussions of human essence, it becomes clear that all humans have the same nature. But despite agreeing in essence, all human individuals, Spinoza emphasizes, differ in existence, which should be understood to mean that they differ according to the external causes that brought about their existence. This interpretation unearths the importance of the specific place any individual has in the order of nature: its existence is due to the coming together of the human essence with the particular external causes. This view thus takes into account the essentially limited character of the human individual and allows for a moral theory that is humanistic and rationally egoistic at the same time, that is, a theory that accommodates our shared nature in our activity while essentially also involving our individuality and action in our passions.

This idea of a shared nature appears in Spinoza's writings in several places in connection with the notion of 'form'. Sarah Tropper looks at the role of this notion and argues that it functions in a similar manner to Aristotelian substantial forms, insofar as Spinoza relates them to the preservation of life, the specificity of affects, and the perfection of the individual. However, for Tropper, the role that 'form' plays in the *Ethics* is not one of explication, but rather one of limitation: it captures the impossibility of transformation and sets boundaries to the possible changes a finite thing can undergo. The way the notion of form features in Spinoza's account of the individual body provides him with the resources to maintain a gradualism on a metaphysical level, while at the same time allowing for some change but not any change whatsoever. Taking these general considerations regarding bodies into account, the case can further be made that form is of particular relevance when we consider individual human beings. Apart from capturing boundaries of what it means to be a human, form specifies the standard according to which agreement between human individuals can be measured, and their individual perfection can be assessed. Viewed in this manner, the notion of form captures fundamental aspects of human life: the distinction between humans and other kinds of finite things, the specificity of human experience as *human* experience, and the greater perfection of one human being in contrast to another.

Rather than thinking about individual humans in terms of a shared nature, Barnaby R. Hutchins proposes that it is by its activities that an individual can be classified as belonging to some kind or other. On his account, since agreement, usefulness, goodness, conatus, and actual essence are virtually identical for Spinoza, belonging to a certain kind—or 'lifeform', in Hutchins' terminology—is determined purely relationally. The activities that individuals engage in will be more or less beneficial to other individuals; to the extent that a set of individuals perform activities that are mutually maximally beneficial, then we have a set of individuals all belonging to the same kind. This view emphasizes the societal character of what it means to be a human being: a human being is a human being only in relation and, on this view, also only *because of* the relationality of engaging in activities that

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benefit others, and being likewise benefitted. The upshot is a reading that treats kinds as dynamic rather than static.

Julie Klein's chapter focuses on the surprising lack of definition of what a human being actually is in Spinoza's work, despite his frequent reference to a common human nature. She attributes this to Spinoza's pursuing several different goals across his writings, which can, first and foremost, be distinguished along the lines of theoretical and practical concerns. Klein points out that Spinoza's mentioning of human nature should not be taken as evidence of a commitment to some kind of species essence that is shared by all humans: to do so would be to underestimate the individuality and determinate character that Spinoza ascribes to each human being. While there is agreement among individual humans, as well as between human bodies, this is simply similarity in diversity, and not identity. The perfect agreement among humans under the guidance of reason, which Spinoza discusses in E4p35, must therefore be helped along by laws and customs. This focus on the practical role of thinking about human nature leads Klein to the diagnosis that interpreting human nature, especially as it features in the idea of an exemplar of human nature (either as imaginative—and thus confused—or as rational—and therefore incapable of capturing the individual essence of a human being), is deeply unsatisfactory. Rather, she argues, we should consider it to be practically rational insofar as it promotes greater activity and thus leads to greater perfection. It is, like Aristotelian practical reason, where knowledge, sensation, and desire meet—that is, where those features come together that make us all humans while also making us the individuals that we are.

But there is also a flipside to the agreement due to a common nature, as Steven Nadler points out, namely, that it is precisely this agreement that provides the ground for a certain kind of disagreement amongst humans. Since there are no universals or general essence that are real features of the world, the agreement between individual humans is due to certain similarities. In Nadler's picture, there is therefore also room for variety among, and greater and lesser resemblance between, individual humans, especially regarding the mind: the more rational human minds are, the more similar they are. Living according to reason means following the same goals. In this way, anyone who becomes more rational also becomes more useful to those individuals that are also rational and vice versa. Therefore, it is in the best interest of any rational agent that she help others to become more rational, as this reduces their passions and thus renders them less obstructive and more helpful in obtaining her own goals. But, as Nadler points out, while our shared human nature allows for this common pursuit of goals, it is also the reason why we enter into conflicts in the first place. It is not simply our passionate nature as such that puts us into conflict, but the fact that our desires arising from this nature are specifically human. Our desires aim at finite goods that only or mainly other humans will strive for too, and many passions such as envy, jealousy, or indignation are felt properly only towards fellow human beings. Thus, while our

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shared nature is the reason we can achieve greatness together, it is also the reason that other human beings can be a greater hindrance, and even more dangerous, to us than any other finite being.

A different take is presented by Lia Levy, who highlights a fundamental difficulty concerning Spinoza's use of the term 'human being'. On the one hand, the term seems to characterize individual humans with respect to a human essence or essentially human features that all humans share. On the other, there is no plausible candidate for such a property because of the irreducible diversity of human individuals. It is against this background that Levy proposes to take the concept 'human being' to be a practical idea guiding practices that qualify as human. By the same token, these practices constitute the normative standards according to which 'human being' can be applied. This is possible because the idea of 'human being' is an imaginative being of reason. As Levy argues, a subject takes herself by the same cognitive act to be a human being and similar to the imagined 'human being'. By taking herself to be human, the subject acquires a motivation to emulate features of the imagined 'human being'. As Levy shows, emulation is a normative concept: emulation can be more or less successful, which is appraised relative to the imagined 'human being'. Therefore, imagining the 'human being' to be like us gives a prescriptive sheen to our thoughts that is a constant presence in human life—human life is a constant self-interpretation in terms of what we ought to be.

The role of self-interpretation in the constitution of human subjects is also addressed by Oliver Istvan Toth, who focuses on the notion of consciousness in Spinoza's philosophy of mind. Spinoza's use of this notion is puzzling. On the one hand, the Cartesian tradition would characterize a specifically human kind of representation with the term 'consciousness', which is reflected by Spinoza's claim that the more capable the human intellect, the more conscious the human mind. On the other hand, Spinoza seems to reject any form of anthropocentrism. His explanation of consciousness in terms of ideas of ideas seems to commit him to the claim that everything is conscious. Toth argues that forming ideas of ideas is a higher bar to clear than one might suspect because it involves an interpretation of the first-order idea. Consciousness, for Spinoza, is the way in which the human mind takes the idea of the modification of its own body to be the representation of an external body. Building on Samuel Newlands's interpretation of Spinozistic selves, Toth argues that a subject takes ownership of her actions through her consciousness: by taking ownership of specifically human actions, she is conscious of herself as a specifically human subject.

Another human mental state is analysed by Ursula Renz, who argues that belief and opinion are both fundamentally and essentially human, as well as perspectival states for Spinoza. Taking, as her starting point, Fichte's point that Spinoza could not have believed his own metaphysical system of general necessary propositions while, at the same time, being a finite individual with convictions and beliefs that stem from a specific, limited viewpoint, Renz argues that both opinions and beliefs

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are, for Spinoza, in need of a finite subject that instantiates them. Accordingly, there is no free-floating thought independent of any affirmation, nor are those opinions and beliefs formed in a vacuum. Rather, the social environment and group an individual belongs to has a significant influence on the opinions and beliefs we form. Consequently, we tend to agree with members of our social circles more than with the individuals who derived their convictions in different social contexts. On this reading, if we also take beliefs to be dependent on the use of signs, and we take signs to be the exclusive preserve of humanity, we might even ascribe to Spinoza the view that only humans can have beliefs, and that not only that there are no beliefs without human subjects having them, but also that to have beliefs is essentially human—along with all the discord this entails.

The human mind is a central aspect of the human being, but so is the body of which this mind is the corresponding idea. Noa Shein puts the focus on the human body as given phenomenologically to each individual human being. By emphasizing the importance of Spinoza's claim in E2a4 that we sense our body as affected in many ways and by many things, she argues that its introduction as an axiom means that it is corroborated by our immediate, subjective experience. We sense our bodies, but we do so in a highly perspectival manner as affected by the specific finite things that act upon us due to our individual environment. This sensation of our body is the ground for regarding ourselves as finite (as I sense something to be external to, i.e., beyond, me), as passive in some respects (as I sense something affecting me), and as existing in a world in which there are other finite things apart from ourselves. The question for Spinoza is thus not *whether* there are finite individuals in the first place; the existence of other finite individuals is rather the starting point for our quest for adequate knowledge and for a metaphysically appropriate account of *how* they are possible. Another significant feature of our subjective phenomenological experience is that it is not merely passive, but involves our own activity, which is sensed in our resistance towards the finite things that affect us. Our experience thus gives us access not only to other bodies, but also to the attribute of Extension. In this manner, our finite human perspective turns out to be the indispensable starting point for our quest to know how things truly are.

Beth Lord's chapter is also concerned with the human body, but through the lens of Galenism. On a Galenic account, the body is characterized by a balance of elements, which for Lord, is what is in the background of Spinoza's account of finite bodies. She identifies a concept of the ratio characteristic of the human body presented in the *Short Treatise* as stemming from the Galenic notion of temperament, as well as that of heat and cold. Spinoza uses the latter to relate the physical and the mental: changes in the body can be explained mechanically and in terms of heat and cold, that is, in terms of faster and slower motion, but they are at the same time the source of emotive states. This picture changes with the *Ethics*, where all bodies are embedded in nature as a whole, which is why their ratio is no longer conceived as internal to the body like a temperament, but as the result of external

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forces acting upon it. This, per Lord, is not a complete rejection of Galenism, but rather an extension of it. Ratio is still related to the notions of bodily integrity and health, just that it is now extended to include not only all living bodies, but also nature itself. It is also no longer sufficient to explain human life. Rather, human life is characterized by a striving to be free and virtuous, and cannot be satisfied with merely maintaining an equilibrium.

As humans, we always live in an association with other humans. Mogens Lærke's contribution shows that, when also considered in this respect, humanity is a rich notion in Spinoza's philosophy. For Lærke, 'human' is not only a common notion that captures what is found in all individual humans and a term to refer to the moral qualities that are praiseworthy in our interactions with others. In addition, tracing its occurrences in Spinoza's writings, Lærke shows that it is frequently used as a term of praise for correspondents and their intellectual generosity. It is this last use that allows him to relate the first two concepts with the humanistic ethical tradition that regarded *humanitas* as an indispensable part of intellectual friendship. An account of the Apostles' authority in the *Theological-Political Treatise* shows how this unifying notion of humanity forms its basis. The authority to teach and advise is not a granted but a natural right that each human possesses qua being human. On Lærke's reading, there is a metaphysical underpinning for this in the *Ethics*' claim that humans can neither be prevented from making judgements nor be prevented from expressing these judgements in one way or another—nor should they be.

Life among fellow human beings is, furthermore, marked by laws. Philip Waldner argues that, despite a metaphysical system that requires explanation in terms of efficient causation, the normativity entailed by such laws is ineliminable once we consider that human beings are constantly acting. For Waldner, this is not merely a question of whether ideas can be causally efficacious or not, but whether Spinoza can indeed dispense with any teleological notion whatsoever. On this reading, appeal to teleology is not simply an upshot of inadequate knowledge of true causes, but is grounded in the reactive attitude that humans have towards other humans, and that we do not have towards any other finite thing. In order to establish this point, Waldner refers to Peter Strawson's account of resentment as a reactive attitude and relates this concept to Spinoza's claim that we love a thing more if we imagine it to be free rather than necessary. In order to truly understand human affects and to understand the human actions we encounter in our lives, a metaphysical reduction to efficient causes might in principle be possible, but it is insufficient. There is an inalienable human perspective in all practical matters and an ineluctable affective stance in our reactions towards fellow human beings.

While to be human is indeed to live among other humans, it is also to be an individual. *Ingenium*, as Daniel Garber shows in his contribution, is Spinoza's preferred term for capturing the particular attitudes, likes, and dislikes that characterize us as individuals. He argues that this notion serves as the basis for Spinoza's

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argument for religious toleration. While there are core imperatives that, for Spinoza, any legitimate religion must ascribe to (to love one's neighbour as oneself and to love God above all), and obedience to these imperatives requires belief in a further set of doctrines (amongst which, that God is an omniscient, benevolent lawgiver), a wide variety of rites, ceremonies, and supplementary doctrines is permissible. These differences among religions come about due to the individual *ingenia* of people, and they are permitted insofar as they promote the required obedience. Spinoza, furthermore, considers that there are also *ingenia* of groups of people, which stem from shared customs and practices that themselves were a consequence of historical circumstances. This distinction allows Garber to shed light on a peculiarity in Spinoza's stance on religious toleration, namely, the tension between freedom of individual worship and the claim that states can choose a preferred religion while prohibiting large assemblies of all other religions. The state church is to be conceived in minimalist terms and as encompassing only the few necessary doctrines, thus ensuring religious freedom by preventing any of the other religious groups from imposing their further doctrines, rites, and ceremonies on all others. After all, each individual is entitled to follow the preferences of her own ingenium.

These considerations regarding individual being, the mind, the body, and society have, in various ways, carved out a place for the human being in Spinoza's philosophy. Michael Della Rocca returns these considerations to the perspective *sub specie aeternitatis* by relating the finite mode to the one substance. He does so by tracing the development of the relation between philosophy and theology from the *Theological-Political Treatise* to the *Ethics*. In the former, they are regarded as independent and as having different ends: philosophy aims at truth, theology at obedience and piety. In the *Ethics*, on Della Rocca's reading, these notions converge: reason leads to piety and religion, turning religion into a rational endeavour for intuitive knowledge. At the same time philosophy gains the character previously reserved for religion, namely, as directed at action. This change can be attributed to the identification of intellect and will, which renders the mind essentially active. Alongside the unification of philosophy and theology, and of intellect and will, there is a further unification of—or a rejection of a previously utilized distinction between—substance and mode to be found in this picture: as there is no sufficient reason to consider that any limitation or negative element belongs to the essence of any finite thing, the concept of that thing in itself is purely positive, in which case, it is the same as the concept of God. In full awareness that this claim contradicts Spinoza's own distinction between substance and mode, Della Rocca argues that there are other passages in Spinoza's work where such a removal of negative elements leads to fundamental changes in concepts, for example in the concepts of love and joy when applied in their most perfect form to God. In the case of finite modes, the restrictions to existence in a certain place at a certain time

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are simply removed, thereby rendering them one with substance or God. Della Rocca concludes by pointing out that the definitions dividing finite individuals as distinct from substance in the beginning of the *Ethics* are only a starting point; they are to be rejected or revised as we move along the trajectory towards a more unified picture of the world, to the effect that man becomes God.

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PART I

THE METAPHYSICS OF FORM

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1

The Identity of Indiscernibles and Human Essence in Spinoza's *Ethics*

Michael LeBuffe

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Humanity is a concept central to Spinoza's *Ethics*. At the beginning of Part Two of the *Ethics*, Spinoza characterizes his project as an account of those consequences of his metaphysics that help us to understand the "human mind and its highest blessedness" (E2pref, C 1:446/G 2:84). Part Three of the *Ethics* is a study of "human actions and appetites" (E3pref, C 1:492/G 2:138). Part Four concerns "human bondage", the ways in which external causes harm human beings (C 1:542/G 2:205). It includes a moral theory built on a "model of human nature" (E4pref, E4def1, E4def2, C 1:545–546/G 2:208–209) and a political theory built on the conviction that rational conflict among human beings is impossible (E4p33–E4p37, E4appIX). Part Five concerns "human freedom", or what a human mind can do to mitigate bondage (C 1:594/G 2:277).

Despite this prominence, Spinoza writes little about species or what it is to be human. His few particular claims about universals in the *Ethics* (notably 2p40s1 and 2p49s) and stronger passages in earlier works (CM 1.1, CM 2.7, KV 1.10, and TIE §99) have led critics to argue that humanity is on Spinoza's view less than fully real.[1] The project of this chapter is to arrive at a better understanding of this central theme of the *Ethics* by means of an emphasis on a principle that shapes Spinoza's discussions of human beings, the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles (PII), which reads in Spinoza's version of it: "Two or more distinct things are distinguished from one another either by a difference in the attributes of substances or else by a difference in their affections" (E1p4).[2] First, I introduce several puzzles

[1] Roughly, the alternatives are that, on Spinoza's view, human nature is (1, the majority view) a confused idea of imagination; (2) a rational construct; or (3) a genuine thing. The difficult text of the *Ethics* requires that almost any thesis be qualified. Recent excellent works that at least roughly represent the first two alternatives are, for (1), Samuel Newlands, "Spinoza on Universals", Chapter 4, and, for (2), Karolina Hübner, "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection", pp. 124–142, and "Spinoza on Essences, Universals, and Beings of Reason", pp. 58–88. An example of the less common alternative, (3), is Diane Steinberg, "Spinoza's Ethical Doctrine and the Unity of Human Nature", pp. 303–324.

[2] Translations here are my own. The characterization of 1p4 as a version of the PII is common. See, for example, Jonathan Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, p. 66; Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, pp. 46–47; or Yitzhak Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance and Thought*, p. 32. Martin Lin, *Being and Reason: An Essay on Spinoza's Metaphysics* is an exception. Lin argues (p. 45) that 1p4 should be understood to mean, "if two things are distinguished, then they have to be distinguished by [attributes or

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about Spinoza's account of human beings that arise in his metaphysics, ethics, and politics (Section 1). An analysis of the influence of the PII on the accounts of humanity in the *Ethics*, which includes two uses of the principle and a notable omission (Section 2), will yield resources for addressing the puzzles (Section 3). Attention to the PII in the argument of the *Ethics* suggests, I argue, that Spinoza takes human essence in this work to be a single, real thing.

1.1 Three Puzzles about Humanity in the *Ethics*

1.1.1 Is Human Essence Real or Imaginary?

Spinoza defines 'essence' in a way that requires any given essence to be the essence of one thing. "I say that to the essence of a thing pertains this, which, if it is given, the thing is necessarily posited and which, if it is taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away; or this without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and vice versa" (E2def2). The definition requires that any essence be necessary and sufficient for something.

On one way of understanding E2def2, it excludes human essences or any species essences because such essences belong to many things, not just one. A line of argument in Part Two of the *Ethics* suggests that this is Spinoza's view. At E2p37dem, citing E2def2, Spinoza argues that, if my essence is human species essence, it would seem that my essence can exist without me because it is your essence, a violation of E2def2. If it is not necessary and sufficient for something, however, human species essence cannot, by E2def2, be a genuine essence. In a scholium shortly after E2p37 (E2p40s1), Spinoza offers an extended criticism of imaginative and confused ideas of universals. This line of argument suggests that what Spinoza frequently refers to as human nature, form, or essence is in fact a confused idea, that there is not really a human essence, and that there are only essences peculiar to singular things. How, though, can Spinoza devote four-fifths of the argument of the *Ethics* to an idea that he himself takes to be confused?

1.1.2 Egoism or Humanism?

A central component of Spinoza's moral psychology emphasizes the self rather than the species. Spinoza defends a theory of *conatus*, on which any thing strives to persevere in its own being (E3p6) and makes any individual's striving its essence (E3p7). The conatus doctrine founds Spinoza's moral psychology, including his theories of desire (E3p9s), of the other affects (E3p11, E3p11s), and of value

modes]". The logical structure of E1p4 is well captured by a conditional, but I think that Lin chooses the wrong conditional. It is better to render E1p4: if two things are distinct, then they are distinct in virtue of a difference in their attributes or their modes.

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judgement, on which I find good whatever I desire (E3p9s) and whatever brings me joy (E3p39s). These theories all inherit a focus on the self from the original *conatus* doctrine: any human being desires what helps her to persevere, takes joy in what helps her to persevere, and associates value with these things.

Spinoza's formal definitions of 'good' and 'evil', however, suggest that to be good is to be more like a model human being. In the Preface to Part Four of the *Ethics*, Spinoza introduces the notion of an ideal or exemplar of human nature that can serve as the basis for our evaluation of things as good or evil. The definitions that follow make the good whatever helps a human being to approach more closely to the model of human nature, and evil whatever impedes her. Many elements of Spinoza's ethics that do not refer to good and evil explicitly—perhaps especially his model of the free man (E4p66s–E4p73) which may be a detailed account of the model of human nature—likewise emphasize humanity. Why, though, given the conatus doctrine and associated doctrines, does human nature matter to the good? Why should the good not be simply what helps me to be more free or to approach more closely to the model of my own nature?

1.1.3 How Is Rational Conflict among Human Beings Impossible?

In the propositions leading up to the account of the origins of the state in Part Four, Spinoza asserts that human beings acting from reason always agree in nature (E4p35) and that a human being acting from reason is always the greatest help to another human being (E4p35c2).

It may seem obvious, though, that, however useful we can be to each other in some situations, we also can have reasons to oppose one another. Spinoza's egoistic theory of desire on which, as we have seen, an individual's desire just is her striving to persevere in being suggests that Spinoza should share this conviction. On such a theory it at least seems that, while we are alike in that each of us wants to preserve ourselves, this similarity can be recast in a way that shows the possibility and even the likelihood of rational conflict: we differ in that I want to preserve *me* whereas you want to preserve *you*. Thus, in many different conditions—such as conditions of scarcity—we will compete for goods that we both want.

This kind of rational conflict marks the political theory of Spinoza's contemporary Thomas Hobbes, for example, whose moral psychology resembles Spinoza's. Notably, Hobbes also defends a conatus doctrine on which any living thing strives to persevere in being.[3] On Hobbes's view, the need for states arises in large part from the inevitability of rational conflict in the state of nature. Hobbes writes, for example, "[T]here is no way for any man to secure himselfe,

[3] See *De Corpore* 4.25.12 for the fullest expression of this view, in Thomas Hobbes, *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, Volume 1, pp. 406–408. For conatus in *Leviathan*, see Chapter 6, pp. 78–79, of Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, Volume 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2012).

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so reasonable, as Anticipation; that is, by force, or wiles, to master the persons of all men he can, so long, till he see no other power great enough to endanger him".[4]

Spinoza's view differs markedly. While conflict marks the state of nature on Spinoza's account also, he contends that states would not be necessary if we were all rational and that their institution is a means of mitigating the effects of irrational passions (E4p37s2 at C 1:567/G 2:237; cf. also TTP 16 at C 2:286/G 3:192–193). What is it about being human that makes rational conflict between egoistic human agents impossible?

1.2 The PII in the *Ethics*

1.2.1 Any Two Things Differ Essentially: E1p5dem

Spinoza's use of the PII at E1p5dem—his only explicit reference to E1p4 in the *Ethics*—shows that, on his understanding of this principle, it requires that any two or more distinct things, including any two or more distinct human beings, differ essentially. Where it is construed as an argument against the Cartesian conception of the human mind as a created substance, E1p5dem and this use of the PII is powerful and appealing. It shows readers what is at stake for Spinoza in developing his own account of human nature.

Here is a schematic presentation of E1p5 and its demonstration. Spinoza argues by assuming the negation of what is to be proven:

> E1p5: In nature there cannot be two or more substances of the same nature or attribute.
>
> 1. If T, then (A or M)
> "If there were two or more distinct substances [of the same nature or attribute, then] they would have to be distinguished from one another either by a difference in their attributes or else by a difference in their affections (by E1p4)" [That is, by the PII].
>
> 2. ~A
> "If only by a difference in their attributes, then it will be conceded that there is only one substance of the same attribute" [By the assumption of sameness of attribute].

[4] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 13, in *Leviathan, Volume 2*, p. 190. The possibility of conflict from reason is also clearly expressed in Hobbes's discussion of the right of nature at the beginning of Chapter 14.

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3. ~M
"But if by a difference in their affections, since a substance is prior in nature to its affections (by E1p1) [we should set the affections aside]" [This requires further discussion].

4. ~ (A or M) [Implied by 2 and 3]

5. Therefore, ~T
". . . if the affections are set aside and [the substance] is considered in itself, that is (by E1def3 and E1a6), considered truly, one cannot be conceived to be distinguished from the other, that is (by E1p4), there cannot be many, but only one of the same nature *or* attribute, q.e.d." [By modus tollens].

Spinoza uses 'nature' (*natura*) twice at E1p5. The second use where Spinoza writes, "nature or attribute", is a reference to essence. 'Nature' and 'essence' have different meanings in the *Ethics* in some contexts, such as where—as in the first use of 'nature' at E1p5—Spinoza refers to nature as a whole.[5] Because Spinoza defines 'attribute' as what the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance (E1def4), however, the synonymy of the terms in the second use of 'nature' at E1p5 is clear: the case of interest is one in which there are two substances that have the same essence.

As Gueroult notes, the case in question is very like the Cartesian conception of human minds.[6] Descartes maintains that each created substance has one principal attribute, which is its essence: "To each substance there is one principal attribute that constitutes its nature and essence [. . .]. Thus extension [. . .] constitutes the nature of body; and thought constitutes the nature of thinking substance" (*Principles of Philosophy* 1.53, AT 8:25.13–18). For human minds, of course, this attribute is thought (see, e.g., Meditation 2, AT 7:27.13–17).[7] While E1p5's role in the *Ethics* demands that it concern substance as Spinoza conceives it as well, Spinoza clearly has Cartesian created substance in view at E1p5: consider a case in which there

[5] Another prominent different sense of 'nature' may be found where the term refers to what is caused or explained, that is, as *natura naturata*, that differs from essence, which Spinoza associates strongly with a thing's causal activity (see E1p29s). In the contexts of immediate interest here, the terms are equivalent in Spinoza's use. I also use them interchangeably.

[6] Martial Gueroult, *Spinoza I: Dieu*, pp. 47–50.

[7] Human nature remains a central topic of critical interest for readers of Descartes. Other central passages include the Preface to the *Meditations*, where Descartes claims that his "Discourse on the method" is best understood to present the view that the essence of the human mind is thought (AT 7:7–8); and the Synopsis, where he argues that the human mind is a substance (AT 7:14). It is perhaps Descartes's view that the human being, understood as a union of mind and body, has a different nature from the substance that is the human mind. Relevant texts include Meditation 6 (AT 7:81), the Fourth Replies (AT 7:228), the Sixth Replies (AT 7:423–424), and a letter to Regius of January 1642 (AT 5:08). The mind–body union is of course a central subject for Descartes scholarship.

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are two human minds, each of which is a substance and each of which has one attribute, thought, which is its essence.[8]

Spinoza's application of the PII at E1p5dem, and particularly at Line 3 of my schema, shows that he takes the principle to mean that any two things must differ essentially. Line 1 sets the problem out: supposing that there were these two substances of the same attribute, by the PII they would have to differ either in their attributes or in their modes. We have supposed that the two substances have the same attribute, so they do not differ in their attributes (Line 2).[9] Perhaps, however, they differ in their modes. For example, perhaps, while Ardern and Bloomfield are both essentially thought, they may be distinguished by their different thoughts: Ardern, say, is thinking of the latest polls while Bloomfield is thinking of the walk home. At the portion of the demonstration that I represent at line 3, Spinoza does not deny that two substances might differ in their modes in this way. Instead, he argues that such differences among substances could not satisfy the PII. As I understand line 3, his claim is that because substances are prior in nature to their modes—the nature of a substance, after all, is an attribute and not any mode—differences in their modes do not satisfactorily distinguish two substances. In other words, as Spinoza understands the PII, it requires that any two or more distinct things differ essentially.

On a traditional understanding of substance as something that endures through change, the argument is appealing. Suppose that at one time, Ardern thinks of Fiji and that, at another time, she thinks of Australia. Do these different thoughts distinguish Ardern from herself? Of course not. As the Cartesian might say, these thoughts are just modes of the substance that is Ardern, and substances can survive changes to their modes. She remains one and the same substance even as she

[8] Some evidence for this interpretation of E1p5dem is the interest that the argument holds when it is construed in this way and, on the other hand, its lack of interest when construed as an argument concerning substances of more than one attribute. There is also, however, textual evidence for this reading. At E1p5dem, Spinoza uses singular number in mentioning attributes where, if he were entertaining his own view of substance, he might use plural. He writes "several substances of the same nature or attribute" ("*. . . plures substantiae ejusdem naturae sive attributi*") and not "of the same natures or attributes". At the end, similarly, he writes, "it will be conceded that there is only one of the same attribute" ("*concedetur ergo non dari nisi unam ejusdem attributi*"). These phrases suggest that in the demonstration, Spinoza considers substances of one attribute only. The demonstration to 1p8, as Gueroult notes, is more explicit. There, Spinoza refers to E1p5 as a proposition that concerns substances of one attribute. The demonstration begins, "A substance of one attribute does not exist unless it is unique (1p5) [. . .]" ("*Substantia unius attributi non nisi unica existit (per prop. 5)*"). Finally, there are contextual reasons for taking E1p5dem to concern a Cartesian conception of created substance. As I discuss in the main text in the next section, shortly after E1p5, at E1p8s2, Spinoza draws conclusions from the discussion for our understanding of human beings; at E2p10s, in defending his own account of human beings, Spinoza cites E1p5.

[9] It is this assumption that is the source of Leibniz's famous objection to E1p5dem. One substance might, on Spinoza's definition of 'substance' (E1def3), have attributes **c** and **d** while a second substance has the attributes **d** and **e**. In this case, although the two substances have the same attribute, **d**, they nevertheless may be distinguished by a difference in their attributes because one has **c** while the other has **e**. See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, Vol. 1, p. 142.

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has these different thoughts. At E1p5dem, however, Spinoza introduces a new case in which we have two substances, which raises a problem for the view. Suppose now that Ardern is thinking about the latest polls but Bloomfield is thinking about retirement. We have assumed that they are two substances, but how are we to distinguish them as the PII requires? We cannot appeal to their different thoughts. We did not take different thoughts to distinguish Ardern from herself in the first case, so it would be ad hoc and illegitimate to insist that they distinguish Ardern from Bloomfield now. Setting particular thoughts to one side, however, only the attribute of thought remains. In that respect, Ardern and Bloomfield are indiscernible, and—or so the argument of E1p5dem suggests—this theory of created substance is therefore unsustainable.[10]

In his commitment to this version of the PII, Spinoza sets himself the challenge of avoiding such a conception of the human being. However he understands humanity, any two human beings must be distinguished by differences in their essences.

1.2.2 Human Beings are Essentially Alike but Have Different External Causes: E2p10s and E1p8s2

Two scholia closely related to E1p5dem—E2p10s (which cites 1p5) and E1p8s2 (which follows E1p5 closely)—yield two views about humanity and essence. First, they show that, on Spinoza's view, individual human beings have species essence. Second, the scholia show that species essence and some external cause are each necessary and jointly sufficient for the existence of an individual human being.

The two passages offer versions of the same argument. I start with E2p10s, which is simple and clear, before turning to the complex, rich discussion of E1p8s2. Here is E2p10 together with Spinoza's scholium:

> E2p10: The being of substance does not pertain to the essence of man [*essentiam hominis*], or substance does not constitute the form of man.
>
> Schol: This proposition is also demonstrated from E1p5 on which there are not two substances of the same nature. Because, however, a number of men can exist, therefore, what constitutes the human form is not the being of substance.

[10] As Leibniz notes in a letter to de Volder 20 June 1703 (See Leibniz, *Philosophische Schriften*, Volume 2, 249–250), a similar argument might be made against Descartes's conception of body. Gonzalo Rodrigues-Pereyra draws my attention to this passage and offers further discussion of Leibniz's use of the PII in this context. Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, *Leibniz's Principle of Identity of Indiscernibles,* Chapter 10.

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This schematic representation of the scholium's argument emphasizes Spinoza's commitment in it to the view that human beings have the same nature:

1. If there are a number of human beings of the same nature, then they are not substances. [By E1p5 and the PII]
2. There are a number of human beings of the same nature. [This will require more discussion.]
3. Therefore, human beings are not substances. (E2p10, modus ponens)

The argument shows that Spinoza takes his account of human beings to escape the challenge of the PII not because we do not have the same nature but because we are not substances. If Spinoza held a weaker view—on which human beings do not really have the same nature but merely resemble one another in ways that capture our imaginations or in ways that we frequently find important—he could maintain that we differ in nature simply and so satisfy the demand of the PII without reference to E1p5. Instead, he allows that we have the same nature, and uses E1p5 to conclude that, because we do, we are not substances.

The argument of E2p10s, however, leaves a great deal unsaid about what human beings are and how it is that we can have the same nature without violating the PII. Presumably, unlike substances, modes might have modes that distinguish them and that are also essential to them. But which modes? The more detailed account of human beings at E1p8s2 yields some clues. It suggests that, while we share the same nature, we also differ in a critical respect: for the existence of any individual human being, some external cause is also necessary. Here is the relevant passage:

> [I]t should be noted (I) that the true definition of anything neither involves nor expresses anything other than the nature of the thing defined [. . .] (II) that, plainly, no definition involves or expresses any certain number of individuals because it expresses nothing other than the nature of thing defined [. . .] (III) that there is necessarily given, for each existing thing, a certain cause on account of which it exists (IV) Finally, it should be noted that this cause on account of which a thing exists either must be contained in the nature and definition of the existing thing (that is, it pertains to its nature to exist) or must be outside it. From these premises it follows that if a certain number of individuals exist in nature, there must necessarily be given a reason [*causa*] why those individuals and why neither more nor fewer exist. If, for example, 20 men exist in nature [. . .] it will not be enough to show the cause of human nature [*naturae humanae*] in general; but in addition it will necessary to show why neither more nor fewer than twenty exist. For (by III) there must be given, for each, a reason why it exists. But this reason [. . .] cannot be contained in human nature [*natura humana*] itself, since the true definition of 'man' does not involve the number 20; therefore (by IV) the reason why these twenty men exist, and consequently why each exists must necessarily be given outside each of them. (E1p8s2)

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Here Spinoza asserts that there is a true definition of 'man', which, as is clear from the first of the points that he emphasizes in the scholium, is once again to assert that there is a human nature. Spinoza adds, however, that in order to understand particular human existence, "it is not enough" to show the cause of human nature in general. "In addition", one must also show the particular cause of each existent. The first claim suggests that species essence is necessary but not sufficient for the existence of a member of that species. There is evidence elsewhere in the *Ethics* that this is Spinoza's view: "[A] horse is destroyed as much if it is changed into a man as if it is changed into an insect" (E4pref; C 1:546/G 2:208). What we also need in order to understand particular human existence, the second claim suggests, is not contained in human nature but must be given "outside" of each individual. For example, Spinoza suggests in making a similar point later in the *Ethics*, one human being can be an external cause of another: "A human being is the cause of the existence but not the essence of another, which indeed is an eternal truth. Thus, they can agree [*convenire*] entirely in essence; in existence, however, they must differ. Therefore, if the existence of one perishes, the other does not therefore perish" (E1p17s at C 1:427/G 2:63.18–22).

A similar passage at E1p11dem2 offers a more comprehensive account of the external causes of finite things: "The reason why substance exists follows from its nature alone, because it certainly involves existence (see E1p7). But the reason why a circle or triangle exists, or why it does not exist, follows not from the nature of these things but from the order of all corporeal nature" (E1p11dem2, C 1:417/G 2:53.5–8). To emphasize the external cause of a finite thing is, for Spinoza, to emphasize its unique place in the order of nature. Spinoza maintains, then, that the order of all of nature is such that nature accommodates certain kinds of finite things, certain species. When it does accommodate the existence of a member of a species, the external circumstances in which the existent arises together with its species nature cause and explain that existence.

1.2.3 A Notable Omission: Defence of the Claim that Human Nature is Same in Each of Us

Spinoza's use of E1p5 in the argument to E2p10s is evidence that he regards human nature as real; the argument turns on the claim that there are two or more human beings of the same nature. Spinoza affirms the reality of human nature by making it a mode of God (E2p10c). More needs to be said about precisely what human nature is. On the face of it, though, Spinoza seems to be facing a problem similar to the one that he finds in the Cartesian account of essence.

It seems clear that human nature is not simply the same thing, in Spinoza's view, as an individual human being's essence. The arguments at E1p8s2 and E1p17s suggest that an individual human being's essence is somehow different from human essence because Spinoza asserts in them that the individual human being can be

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destroyed without human essence being destroyed. By the "vice versa" clause of E2def2, however, the destruction of a thing is the destruction of its essence.

The passages suggest that, although human essence is not the same as an individual human being's essence, it is nevertheless a component of each human being's essence. Spinoza maintains that species essence is necessary for the existence of an individual of that species, so he maintains that species essence does part of the work of individual essence, which, recall, is necessary and sufficient for the individual's existence. Later in the *Ethics*, Spinoza frequently associates human nature with reason or, equivalently in these contexts (for example, E4p26dem or E4p27dem), with a mind's adequate ideas. Adequate ideas and inadequate ideas are all that there is to a human mind (see, e.g., E2p49dem or E3p3dem). This doctrine supports the natural reading of E1p8s2 and E1p17s. Once again, on this conception of human nature, human nature is part of the individual nature.

How, though, do human nature and the other components of individual nature associate? It may seem natural to suppose that Ardern has an instance of human nature, which is a component of her individual nature and that Bloomfield has a different instance of human nature which is a component of his individual nature. We have seen that, if some modes other than human nature are essential to one of them, these further modes can do the work of distinguishing Ardern from Bloomfield. We should still be concerned, however, to distinguish human nature in Ardern from human nature in Bloomfield. Like the human beings themselves, those modes of the human beings cannot be both discrete and identical.

One might think that, although Spinoza's own commitments require an argument distinguishing one instance of human nature from another, he simply overlooks the need for it. My own view is that this is unlikely. As we have seen, Spinoza's first discussions of human beings in the *Ethics* concern the PII. A similar position, the Cartesian view that the nature of any human mind is thought, motivates E1p5dem and the use of the PII in it. Spinoza also uses the PII, via E1p5, at E2p10s, again in the context of an account of human nature. This problem, moreover, is in the background in Descartes, who, although he tends not to discuss life after death, has no means of differentiating human minds without bodies. Aquinas explicitly raises the objection that human souls without bodies might be identical, rejects that conclusion as heretical, and insists that such souls are both indiscernible and non-identical.[11]

Instead, although it may be natural to take Spinoza at E1p8s2 and elsewhere to maintain that each of us has her own human nature, which is a component of her individual nature, the omission of any defence of this view is a reason to think that Spinoza does not hold it. He does not state the view explicitly anywhere in the *Ethics*. If he held it, it seems likely that he also would have found it in need of defence.

[11] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae,* 1a 76.2 obj. 2 and ad 2. Ursula Renz discusses this issue in connection with individuation in Spinoza: Ursula Renz, "Finite Subjects in the *Ethics*: Spinoza on Indexical Knowledge, the First Person and the Individuality of Human Minds", pp. 206–208.

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1.3 The Puzzles Resolved

1.3.1 Human Essence is Real

The first puzzle concerned the reality of human essence. Parts Two to Five of the *Ethics* emphasize humanity: the human mind, human affects, human bondage, and human freedom. Spinoza's definition of 'essence' at E2def2 requires, however, that any essence be necessary and sufficient for something, and Spinoza makes human essence only necessary, not sufficient, for the individual human being. Moreover, he argues that we frequently have highly imaginative and confused ideas of species. These commitments seem to be obstacles to a robust doctrine of human essence.

The argument of E2p10s requires that Spinoza takes human essence to be a real thing: we have the same essence and that is why Spinoza reasons from E1p5 to the conclusion that we are not substances but modes. The discussion of human beings at E1p8s2, which anticipates E2p10s, offers further evidence for this conclusion: Spinoza writes there that a true definition expresses the nature of thing defined, and then he asserts that there is a true definition of 'human being'. This textual evidence outweighs the evidence that critics usually cite for the conclusion that Spinoza rejects universals or that he considers them mere beings of reason, which is found in different, earlier works or occurs in passages in the *Ethics*, such as 2p40s1 and 2p49s, that concern the flawed ideas of ordinary people.[12]

Spinoza can maintain that there is human nature without also conceding that human nature is necessary and sufficient for each existing human being (E1p8s2 and E1p17s) because human nature differs from the essence of an existing human being. The emphasis on necessary and sufficient conditions at E2def2 explains why Spinoza discusses species essence together with the external causes of existence at E1p8s2 and E1p11dem2: he is describing what is required for individual existents, that is, what makes up individual essence in these passages. On Spinoza's view, it is (a) human essence and (b) those modes of an individual that reflect the influence of external causes on her that, together, are necessary and sufficient for her and so constitute her individual essence.

To be finite for Spinoza, in the first instance, is to be limited (E1def2, E1p8s1), so it is unsurprising that he should take the essence of a finite thing to reflect its limitation. There is also direct textual evidence of this view in the *Ethics*. It includes E3p9, which I discuss in the next section, but the clearest passage is E4p33: "Human

[12] See note 1 for references. Recent helpful discussions of these passages may be found in Newlands, "Spinoza on Universals", and Hübner, "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection", which defend different interpretations. I think the fact that Spinoza maintains a given position in the CM, KV, and TIE is not always even prima facie evidence that he holds it also in the *Ethics*. In this case, the absence in the *Ethics* of a view that Spinoza defends explicitly and clearly takes to be important in earlier works is evidence, to my mind, that Spinoza's view changed.

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beings can disagree in nature to the extent that they are brought into conflict by affects that are passions". Spinoza writes here, not merely that we can disagree insofar as we are passionate but that we can disagree *in nature* insofar as we are passionate.[13] Those of our properties that bear the marks of external influence, and notably (but, E3post1 suggests, not exclusively) our passions, are for Spinoza constituents of our individual natures.

It is the emphasis on external causes that shows how Spinoza takes his conception of human individuals to accommodate the PII. As we have seen at E1p11dem2, Spinoza suggests that to emphasize the external cause of a finite thing is to emphasize its place in the order of the whole of nature. The view anticipates a familiar view in Leibniz, who also finds traces of the whole of nature in each soul: "And so, when one considers carefully the connection of things, one can say that from all time in the soul of Alexander there are the remains of everything that has happened to him, and the marks of everything that will happen, and even traces of everything that happens in the universe, even though only God can recognise them all".[14] Together, E2def2, E1p8s2, and E1p11dem suggest that human nature exists and that an individual human being's nature consists of human nature together with the circumstances that necessitate that particular human being's existence. The latter is her particular place in the order of the whole of nature and so distinguishes her, for Spinoza as for Leibniz, from all other finite things.

1.3.2 Humanism is Rational Egoism

The second puzzle concerned moral psychology and ethics. In his moral psychology—most clearly in the conatus doctrine but also in accounts of our desires and our judgement of good and evil—Spinoza emphasizes the self. Why, then, in his discussion of good and evil at E4pref, the subsequent definitions of 'good' and 'evil', and other ethical doctrines such as the free man propositions at the end of Part Four of the *Ethics,* does Spinoza emphasize humanism rather than egoism?

[13] Steven Nadler's chapter in this volume emphasizes such disagreement. Nadler argues, persuasively I think, that it is passions that are common to human beings—the fear of tigers, the love of food—that bring us into conflict. This is, as Nadler emphasizes, a Hobbesian view and, in a Hobbesian sense, a kind of agreement. A way of restating the comparison of Hobbes and Spinoza, then, is to say that Hobbes makes some actions from characteristic human passions, and particularly from fear, rational, whereas Spinoza reserves rationality for a much narrower class of actions. Conflict from common passions, on Spinoza's view, is predictable and explicable, but not rational.

[14] Leibniz, "Discourse on Metaphysics" (1686) in Leibniz, *Philosophische Schriften*, Volume 4, p. 433. Note, however, that whereas the PII precedes and, at least as I understand it, is a premise in Spinoza's argument to this conclusion, in the "Discourse", it is a consequence of this conception of finite individuals: "Several considerable paradoxes follow from this, such as, among others, that it is not true that two substances can resemble one another entirely and differ only in number".

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The account of individual nature that I have already offered provides a provisional solution to this puzzle. Human nature is a component of individual nature. Promoting human nature then, is promoting a certain aspect of the self over another, but it is not promoting something wholly different from the self. A closer look at the conatus doctrine can show that Spinoza reproduces in his moral psychology the distinction between the internal and the external that characterizes his metaphysics of finite things. It offers a more detailed explanation of the relation between the self and the human species and therefore also of that between Spinoza's moral psychology and his ethics.

Spinoza maintains at E3p6 that each singular thing strives to persevere in its being. Then he associates this striving with a thing's nature: "The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing other than the actual essence of the thing" (E3p7). For minds, Spinoza associates adequate, or total, causation with a mind's adequate, or clear and distinct ideas, and he associates inadequate, or partial, causation with its inadequate, or confused ideas (E3def1, E3p3). He draws upon this association in characterizing a mind's activity at E3p9, where he maintains that striving expresses itself in both sorts of ideas: "The mind, both insofar as it has clear and distinct ideas [i.e., acts] and also insofar as it has confused ideas [i.e., is passive], strives [. . .] to persevere in its being". This proposition is evidence, once again, that our nature, striving, is constituted in part by something internal to us and in part by something of the external world: our passions belong to our individual essences.

Two features of the conatus doctrine complement accounts of essence in the first two Parts of the *Ethics*. First, the conatus doctrine is durational. Whereas discussions of humanity at E1p8s2 and E2p10s describe causation without respect to duration, the conatus doctrine concerns the essence of individuals existing in time. This, I think, is an additional detail and not a distinct view. Spinoza, like Descartes before him, does not distinguish between the cause of a thing's existence and the cause of its conservation.[15] The clearest statement of this position in Spinoza's works may be found in the *Political Treatise*: "[T]he same power that [natural things] need to begin to exist they need to go on existing. From this it follows that the power by which natural things exist, and consequently by which they work, can be nothing other than the eternal power itself of God" [TP 2.1, G 3:276].[16] Spinoza refers to the power of singular things in the demonstration of the conatus doctrine, similarly, as things that "express the power by which God is and acts in a certain and determinate way" (E3p6dem). This shows that the views he expresses at E3p6dem are the same as the more explicit passage in the *Political*

[15] For Descartes's view, see, for example, *Principles of Philosophy* 1.21 (AT VIII:13/CSM 1:200).

[16] Note that TP 2.1 begins with a discussion of definition and existence similar to that of E1p8s2. I make a more detailed case for this view in Michael LeBuffe, *Spinoza on Reason*, pp. 39–44.

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Treatise: finite things, like human beings, are finite and particular expressions of God's nature. God's nature is to be a self-cause. Therefore, finite things, such as human beings, are finite and particular self-causes. Spinoza understands this nature durationally as a striving to persevere in existence.

Second, Spinoza offers in the conatus doctrine a more detailed characterization of individual essence. The claims of his metaphysics suggest—or so I have argued—that the essence of an individual human is a mode that has two constituents: human nature and something else that reflects the influence of external causes on her. The opening propositions of Part Three cast a similar distinction in terms of adequate causation and inadequate, or partial causation (E3def2, E3p1). The implication of E3p9, then, is that each of us is human insofar as she is active and is the individual that she is insofar as she is active as well as passive.

Spinoza's conception of passivity helps to explain how he can consider something external to an individual to be a constituent of her essence. We are active when we are the adequate cause of what we do or, in other words, when something follows from our nature alone; we are passive, however, when we are an inadequate or partial cause of something that happens in us (E3def1). If our nature is our activity, part of that activity is our activity as a partial cause. Spinoza understands imagination, sensation, and passive emotions as such kinds of activity. They have the character that they do, in part, as the result of the influence of the external world on us, but, as E3p9 indicates, they also arise in part as the result of our activity and therefore belong in a distinctive way to us.

The puzzle about morality, then, may be recast in terms of activity and passivity. To say that I should do what I can to be more like a model of human nature is, for Spinoza, to say that I should do what I can to be more active. Why, then, is it that in pursuing what is good for me I should pursue what makes me more active?

The detailed account of individual essence in the conatus doctrine shows the extent to which the two constituents of a human being's individual essence—human essence and those external causes that distinguish her from all other things—intermingle in individual essence. To be more active is certainly, for Spinoza, to be more of an adequate cause.

Paradigmatically, it is to acquire more adequate ideas (E4p26 – E4p28). Spinoza's account of passivity as partial causation suggests, however, that, while we can be fully adequate causes, for example, in the attainment of adequate ideas, activity is frequently a matter of degree. As I become more active, then, this change can also show itself in my passions, which vary as a result. I experience hope rather than fear, perhaps, or love rather than hate or, more simply, weaker versions of harmful passions and stronger versions of helpful ones. The aim of Spinoza's theory of value is humanistic, then, in that it emphasizes the human constituent of individual essence, but it is also egoistic. It places value on increased activity in our whole selves, which includes the extent to which we are active in our passions.

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1.3.3 Rational Conflict Would be the Conflict of a Thing with Itself

The third puzzle arose from the strong claims that form the basis for Spinoza's political theory, including notably E4p35: "To the extent that human beings live from the guidance of reason, exactly to that extent do they always necessarily agree in nature". Even if prudence suggests cooperation in many circumstances, it also seems obvious that this doctrine is too strong: two human beings, each striving to persevere in her own being, would, in many circumstances, have reason to oppose one another.

The basis for this strong, counterintuitive view, Spinoza's accounts of essence together with his omission suggest, is Spinoza's theory of human essence, on which human essence in all human beings is one thing. This view explains the claim of E4p35. To act from reason is to act from adequate ideas; to act from adequate ideas, however, is to be fully active, and our activity is our humanity. If humanity is just one and the same thing in both of us, then, one person's action from reason just is my action. Of course we agree.

Dianne Steinberg's interpretation of E4p35 and related doctrines is similar to this one.[17] Steinberg argues, as I have, that on Spinoza's account there is only one human nature. A problem Michael Della Rocca finds with the view is that its plausibility rests wholly on its power to explain these claims. Della Rocca contends that the view has no independent basis in the *Ethics*.[18] The textual evidence for the view in the passages themselves, where the view makes sense of Spinoza's strong and otherwise mysterious claims is I think already a substantial basis for the view. Moreover, there is an independent basis for the view where Spinoza maintains that the destruction of my species essence is also the destruction of yours: "[Human beings] can agree [*convenire*] entirely in essence; in existence, however, they must differ. Therefore, if the existence of one perishes, the other does not therefore perish. However, if the essence of one can be destroyed, and become false, the other's essence would also be destroyed" (E1p17s, G 2:63, quoted in part earlier). This passage is inexplicable on a view that takes species essence to have different particular instances. Why should one think that the destruction of one instance of human nature in me should also mean the destruction of another instance of human nature in you? On the view that human nature is one thing, however, Spinoza's claim make sense: human nature, a single thing, is necessary for my existence and yours alike.

The argument here finds two further bases in Spinoza's metaphysics for a response to Della Rocca. First, Spinoza's definition of 'essence' requires that any

[17] Steinberg, "Spinoza's Ethical Doctrine and the Unity of Human Nature".

[18] Michael Della Rocca, "Egoism and the Imitation of Affects in Spinoza", pp. 123–148. This paper provoked and informed many of my positions here. For Della Rocca's complaint that Steinberg's view has no evidence, see his note 17, pp. 145.

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essence correspond with just one thing, for which it is a necessary and sufficient condition. Human essence, E1p8s2 and E2p10s show, is a genuine essence. Therefore, human essence corresponds with just one thing: humanity. Second, Spinoza omits any defence of the view that there are discrete, identical instances of human essence against the PII. Given the historical prominence of the concern and Spinoza's attention to the PII in discussions of human beings in the *Ethics*, one might expect such a defence. The omission suggests, then, that Spinoza does not take human essence to have discrete instances and so does not take his view to require such defence. Some critics might have reservations about this second point, which depends upon the tacit influence on Spinoza of a deeply held basic principle. Della Rocca, however, who emphasizes the explanatory power of the principle of sufficient reason throughout the *Ethics* and who takes the PII to associate closely with the need for explanation should not.[19]

1.4 Conclusion

To return to the initial example, Spinoza's uses of the PII suggest that Ardern and Bloomfield are indiscernible insofar as they are human and active but that they are discernible and are discrete insofar as their individual essences show the influence of external causes. So stated, the interpretation leaves open the question of whether their human essences are discrete but indiscernible in violation of the PII. While this may be a natural way to read some passages of the *Ethics*, Spinoza neither defends nor even explicitly states this position. The omission to defend a position that might seem to violate the PII suggests that he takes his view to conform to the principle: human essence is indiscernible in different human beings but it is also identical. Thus, Ardern and Bloomfield are one insofar as they are human and are two, and distinguishable, in virtue of their different places in the order of the whole of nature.[20]

[19] Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, pp. 46–47, 100–101.

[20] Thanks to audiences at Otago, Queensland, Graz, and UCSD for their help with earlier drafts of this chapter. I am grateful especially to Deborah Brown, Calvin Normore, Ursula Renz, Sarah Tropper, Oliver Istvan Toth, and Michael Della Rocca for helpful comments.

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Spinoza on the Notion of a Human Form

Sarah Tropper

Spinoza's view on the nature of human beings, as it is found in the *Ethics*, is constrained by two important commitments regarding the essence of things:[1] On the one hand, a gradualism regarding the distinction of individuals on an ontological level (E2p13s, C 1:458/G 2:96)—that is to say, a view according to which all individuals differ merely by degree—and, on the other hand, the suggestion that there is such a thing as a specifically human nature (E1p8s2, C 1:415/G 2:51; 4pref, C 1:545/G 2:208) that can be distinguished from the natures of other finite beings (E3p57s, C 1:528/G 2:187). Hence Spinoza seems to be committed to two opposing views: that there is no specific but only a gradual difference between individuals, while also assuming that there is something specific to humans that is not shared with other kinds of things.

One possible response to this apparent conflict is to show that one of the two claims is either incorrect or must be understood in a different manner. Along these lines, it has been argued that it is not the case that there is, strictly speaking, such a thing as a human nature that can be clearly demarcated from other specific natures,[2] that it is indeed possible to speak of a human nature that is distinguished by a particularly high degree of bodily and therefore also mental complexity without negating that the distinction between individuals is merely gradual,[3] or that there is a specifically human nature that is characterized by the possession of a mind (*mens*), rather than mere possession of a soul (*anima*).[4]

The aim of this chapter is to take a different look at this issue by focussing on the notion of 'form' [*forma*]. Remarkably, Spinoza uses this term as a means to capture the difference between individuals as well as between kinds of individuals.[5] How

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[2] See, e.g., Wilson, "'For They do not Agree in Nature with Us'", especially pp. 186–187, who denies that there can be a sharp line between human and non-human individuals; Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, pp. 35–38; Melamed, "Spinoza's Anti-Humanism".

[3] See, e.g., Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics*, pp. 132–143, and Perler, "Spinoza über Tiere".

[4] See, e.g., Delahunty, *Spinoza*, p. 208.

[5] This has not yet received much attention. An exception is Pierre-François Moreau's "The Metaphysics of Substance and the Metaphysics of Forms", where he points out that there is a varied use of the term 'form' in Spinoza's writings that goes beyond the mere rejection of substantial forms.

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can this be and what does the analysis of this peculiarity reveal about Spinoza's implicit ontology of forms in general and of the form of humans in particular? To address these questions, I will proceed in the following manner: First, I will relate those passages in the *Ethics* that are concerned with different natures to the tradition of form as a species-making feature. These passages indicate that despite an absolutely unmistakable rejection of the Aristotelian concept of substantial form in his metaphysics, Spinoza acknowledges the value the idea of form has in natural-philosophical, psychological, and value-theoretical contexts. Second, I will analyse in greater detail Spinoza's use of 'form'. It will emerge that although the term 'forma' is often used as if it had no deeper meaning, there are a couple of instances, in particular in the so-called 'Physical Digression', where it should be read as signalizing the existence of something akin to species. I will then use this analysis to sketch a solution to the problem of how the assumption of species or natures of individual things may be reconciled with Spinoza's gradualism. The last two sections comprise a discussion of how the notion of form, as vindicated in the 'Digression', contributes to the understanding of the idea of human nature and its pre-eminent status in the order of nature (Section 3) and the assumption of there being such a thing as a specifically human lifeform (Section 4).

2.1 Specific Distinction: towards an Aristotelianism without Substantial Forms

The metaphysical side of things in Spinoza looks relatively straightforward. Let's take, for example, E2p13s, where Spinoza states: "For the things we have shown so far [i.e. that individuals consist of a mind and a body] are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate" (C 1:458/G 2:96). In general, it is clear that what Spinoza is suggesting here is that all (living) beings are organized in a kind of continuum, presupposing the same fundamental type of constitution in all of them. They are thus not only all composed of a body and a corresponding mind, but what is more: they are, it seems, fundamentally of the same kind, such that differentiation between them is merely a matter of varying degrees of animation, complexity, reality, and perfection. There is, therefore, nothing in this picture that suggests itself as a rigorous criterion for a distinction between kinds or species of things. Nor is a differentiation based on particular properties even possible on this fundamental ontological level, because, on this level, all things simply share their fundamental properties: there is only extension, qualifying all bodies however they may vary in complexity and organization, and thought, qualifying the ideas or minds corresponding to those bodies.

But the *Ethics* is also, and importantly so, invested in a moral or practical endeavour. And this endeavour implicates the idea of a human nature in a more

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robust sense than could be fulfilled by the notion of a merely gradual difference between individuals. It has been suggested that such an idea can be found, for example, in E4p36dem[6]:

> Hence (by P28), the greatest good of those who seek virtue is to know God, i.e. (by IIp47 and P47S), a good that is common to all men, and can be possessed equally by all men insofar as they are of the same nature, q.e.d. (C 1:564/G 2:234)

Like several other passages in which Spinoza refers to the human good, this passage by itself does not need to be read as demanding a distinct human nature: it is possible that this claim could simply be extended to include other beings as well. But such a reading is discouraged by several other passages that establish a hierarchy of being, for example by E4p37s1, where Spinoza argues that we can use lower animals to our advantage because "they do not agree in nature with us, and their affects are different in nature from human affects (see E3p57s)".[7] What is denied here is not merely that we do not share our particular goals with other kinds of beings due to a difference in our affectivity, but what is further suggested is the additional notion that there is a difference in nature between individuals of different species. In addition, if we follow up on the reference that Spinoza uses to support this claim, that is, if we go back to E3p57s, we end up at a rather interesting proposition for the following for two reasons: the demonstration preceding this scholium links the affective difference between kinds of beings to the 'Physical Digression' (i.e. the section of Axioms, Lemmas and Postulates following E2p13) by invoking the Digression's first axiom after Lemma 3 (G 2:99). We will turn our focus on the 'Digression' shortly, but first we should note that this scholium itself provides an *almost* Aristotelian-sounding picture. This passage reads:

> 3p57: Each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other. [. . .]
>
> Scholium: From this it follows that the affects of the animals which are called irrational (for after we know the origin of the mind, we cannot in any way doubt that the lower animals feel things) differ from men's affects as much as their nature differs from human nature. Both the horse and the man are driven by a lust to procreate; but the one is driven by an equine lust, the other by a human Lust. So also the lusts and appetites of insects, fish, and birds must vary. (C 1:528/G 2:186–187)

[6] See Hübner, "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection", p. 127. Cf. also Renz, "Spinoza on the Good Life for Humans".

[7] For a critical discussion of this passage in particular, see Wilson, "'For They Do Not Agree in Nature with Us'".

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So what do I mean when I call this '*almost* Aristotelian-sounding'? It is simply the following: traditionally, Aristotelian considerations regarding species are characterized by at least four features. Most significant is firstly that Aristotelianism provides a rigorous and unambiguous metaphysical grounding for species—a job done in particular by 'substantial forms'. Constituting the metaphysical basis for the idea of species, this notion thereby guarantees that there are clear-cut distinctions between the different species. Second, being a fundamental concept of Aristotelian ontology, the notion of substantial form serves as a means to address a wide variety of further metaphysical questions, among them the crucial questions as to what makes a thing the thing it is, what makes it a member of a species, and what properties are held naturally by members of such a species.[8] Third, the assumption that species are grounded in substantial forms is also at the heart of many of those general claims that are related to life-processes responsible for the conservation of species, in particular reproduction: given the notion of substantial forms, the endurance over generations is, and—so Aristotle—must be, organized along the distinctions between species. Fourth, and finally, the idea of substantial form also has a normative aspect in Aristotelianism insofar as membership in a species also serves as a criterion for assessing the degree of perfection or privation a being has as a member of that species.[9]

Spinoza must have had a clear understanding of what the assumption of different species and the notion of substantial form contribute to our understanding of life. This is not to say that he endorses the very concept of substantial forms in an Aristotelian-Scholastic sense. That Spinoza has little patience for such a strong theory of 'forms' is clear from various remarks, such as the claim that "substantial forms and real accidents […] are clearly absurd" (CM 2.1; C 1:316/G 1:249) or that the "childish and frivolous doctrine of Substantial Forms and Qualities" rests on "weak foundations" (Letter 13 to Oldenburg; C 1:208/G 4:64). And yet, if we consider again the passage quoted above, we may detect several important similarities. There are, he maintains, aspects of life that are species-specific, such as lust, which is why we can discern "human lust" from "equine lust" as well as the lusts and appetites of insects from those of fish and birds. Note also that procreation is explicitly mentioned and the theme of the conservation of species is therefore also, at least implicitly, present. Finally, as we will see later on, there is for Spinoza also a connection between the form and the perfection of an individual.

E3p57 and similar passages, when viewed in this light and added to those attributing common goals to a shared nature, provide a clear indication that Spinoza

[8] For an overview over the function of substantial form, see Anstey, "Essences and Kinds", pp. 13–14; for a discussion of their role in early modern natural philosophy, see Pasnau, "Form, Substance, and Mechanism".

[9] For the claim that there is a fundamentally normative or prescriptive aspect to species membership, although due to non-Aristotelian reasons and based on the idea of 'life according to nature', in Spinoza's metaphysics, see Miller, "Spinoza on Life According to Nature".

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assumes that there is a reasonable, non-arbitrary way to talk about species and to talk about the ability to achieve certain things as a species-specific ability. Of course, Spinoza is not alone with this view. While the heavy metaphysical baggage that comes with Aristotelian substantial forms is, by and large, rejected by a significant number of thinkers in the seventeenth century, many were nonetheless not completely immune against agreeing to some of its obvious explanatory usefulness.[10] While it is clear that the metaphysical system Spinoza puts forward is in important respects very different from any Aristotelian-Scholastic system, a fundamental difference does not preclude certain important similarities that should not be disregarded too hastily. One of those similarities is the idea that individuals fall into particular kinds such that we have a reason to speak of more or less perfect members of a certain kind, of more and less perfect kinds, of kind-specific properties, and the importance of the duration of a kind. In short: there is a role to play for 'form' in Spinoza, and this role is akin to the role it has been playing since antiquity.

2.2 Natures of Bodies as Forms and Why Gradualism Does Not Rule Out Gaps

In the previous section, I have shown that the idea of species is present in the *Ethics*, even though it is not developed in terms of an explicit metaphysical doctrine. In this section, I would like to draw attention to another finding that is no less surprising: although Spinoza discards the Aristotelian notion of 'substantial form' as "clearly absurd", "childish and frivolous", he uses the simple term 'forma' in various positive ways in his writings.

Early, in his *Principles of Descartes' Philosophy*, he defines an idea as "that form of each thought through the immediate perception of which I am conscious of the thought itself" (C 1:238/G 1:149) and discusses in later passages the 'form of error' [*forma erroris*] as consisting in "Privation because we are deprived of a perfection which is suited to our nature", that is "a privation of the perfect, *or* right, use of freedom" (C 1:259/G 1:175–176). In Descartes' own exposition of the source of error in the *Principles*, we do not find the term 'form of error'. A similar reference to the 'form of error' is also found in the *Ethics* (E2p33dem; C 1:472/G 2:116), alongside the 'form of falsity' [*falsitatis forma*] as privation of knowledge (E2p35dem; C 1:472/G 2:116–117). In the TIE we find, in addition, a 'form of the true' [*forma veri*] (C 1:31/G 2:26) and 'form of truth' [*forma veritatis*] (C 1:43/G 2:38).[11]

[10] A soul or mind as a distinguishing feature that sets humans apart from other kinds of things is found, for example, in Descartes (in particular his letter to More, 5 February 1649, CSMK 365–366) or Boyle ("The Origin of Forms and Qualities According to the Corpuscular Philosophy", p. 15.)

[11] When discussing these occurrences, Moreau suggests that 'form' is used here to indicate "the essence of things which have no essence" ("The Metaphysics of Substance and the Metaphysics of Forms", p. 29) and there is a certain truth to this characterization. The varied use of 'form' by Spinoza, especially in connection with 'error', but also with 'form of the state', suggests that a discussion of it should proceed

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A further frequent occurrence of the term 'forma' is found in Spinoza's political writings, where the notion of a 'form of state' [*imperii forma*] (TTP 18.1–2, C 2:322–323/G 3:221, 36, C 2:331/G 3:228; TP 7.26, C 2:558/G 3:319; as 'form of the Commonwealth': TP 6.2, C 2:532/G 3:297; as 'form of monarchy: TP 7.30, C 2:560/G 3:321) is invoked in several places. Interestingly, in his discussion of the various types of government, the form of a state is not merely a description of its composition, but also something that is characterized by a certain stability as well as determinacy. In the ideal composition of the Aristocratic state, an issue of utmost importance is "the ratio of the Patricians to the multitude" (TP 8.13, C 2:571/G 3:330) and, when adhering to certain considerations regarding the selection of Patricians, "the form of the state will still be maintained, and the ratio between the Patricians and the multitude will always be able to be preserved" (TP 8.14, C 2:571/G 3:330).

Although these uses show that Spinoza is ready to employ the term 'forma' to refer to various types of things, they are nonetheless not in and of themselves revealing with respect to the matter at hand. This changes, however, once we take a closer look at the way in which the notion of form appears in the 'Physical Digression' in Part Two of the *Ethics*, for example in Lemmas 4 and 5 that follow Proposition 13:

> L4: If, of a body, or of an Individual, which is composed of a number of bodies, some are removed, and at the same time as many others of the same nature take their place, the [NS: body, or the] Individual will retain its nature, as before, without any change of its form [*forma*].
>
> L5: If the parts composing an Individual become greater or less, but in such a proportion that they all keep the same ratio of motion and rest to each other as before, then the Individual will likewise retain its nature, as before, without any change of form [*forma*]. (C 1:461/G 2:100–101)

In these lemmas, Spinoza points to a limit on possible changes of complex individuals. Remarkably, he does not just vindicate this limit in the constitution of individuals simply in terms of them being composites of bodily items. He furthermore assumes that if the systematic organization of some individual, its 'union' (as it is phrased in the demonstration to Lemma 4; C 1:461/G 2:100), remains the same, the individual persists as what it is and thus retains its nature, and it is this point that is emphasized by the denial of there being a change of form.

Two further remarks are in place here. Note that the concept of form does no explanatory work here. It does not, as it were likely to do in an Aristotelian context,

for now without equating it to essence, despite the fact that Spinoza at least once equates them ["*essentia seu forma*" in E4pref; C 1:546/G 2:208) in the *Ethics*.

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provide the grounds for the sameness of the individual's nature, but merely accentuates or emphasizes this assumed sameness. This is significant as it corroborates my previous claim that Spinoza is not altogether unsympathetic to the Aristotelian notion of species but rejects its metaphysical underpinning. And indeed, taking the quoted lemmas seriously, there are no metaphysical, but merely physical grounds for what is referred to here as the nature of some individual.

However, and this leads me to my second remark, Spinoza hints at a way as to how one could explain, or perhaps rather *explicate*, this sameness of nature: Lemma 4 accounts for the sameness of the nature of an individual by the balance of removed and added constituent parts, and Lemma 5 invokes the ratio of motion and rest of the constituent parts of the individual. This suggests that the demarcation between bodily individuals is by-and-large a matter of geometrico-kinematic properties,[12] in which case their differences are reducible to its quantitative or quantifiable properties.

But would this not amount to a view where all important differences dissolve into the individual's quantitative properties? In my judgement, the quoted lemmas indeed suggest that each thing is the individual thing, it is *qua* its particular ratio, and remains that thing even when it is modified in other features. The question is, though, whether this sameness of ratio may also serve as a criterion for the individual's belonging to specific kinds. This is a viable view: if the nature of individuals is a matter of their ratio of motion and rest and thus reducible to quantitative features, it seems relatively easy to discern similarities in the ratios of several individuals which would enable us to divide them into kinds according to their ratios. So, even if this view does not suppose any rigorous, essential separation between kinds, it makes room for gradual differences between individuals and, more importantly, for classifying them along the lines of these differences.

But there are two problems with this reading. First, and this is merely an exegetical point, it does nothing to explain why Spinoza invokes the notion of form. I have stated that this term has no explanatory function in these lemmas; still, it is mentioned and the less of an explanatory function it has, the more its presence is remarkable. Second, and more crucially, the proposed reading does not contribute much with regard to accounting for the way in which Spinoza refers to the idea of human nature in the *Ethics*, since, on such a reading, the concept of 'human' is still a vague notion at best and an arbitrary notion at worst. In a nutshell, despite its virtue of allowing for a physical explication of species-differences, the proposed reading still seems to comprise all the worries that a metaphysical gradualism entails.

An important question thus arises: is there a case to be made for a possibly less rigorous, but nonetheless metaphysically grounded, notion of what it means to be a 'human' (or, by implication, a horse or an insect) that goes beyond being a mere

[12] See, e.g., Perler, "Spinozas Theorie der Universalien" and Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*.

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or mainly a figment concocted by the human mind in its endeavour to classify the world based on confused or limited knowledge? I shall address this question in two steps. In the remainder of this section, I consider a further use of the term 'forma' in the *Ethics*, which entails, as I shall argue, somewhat more robust metaphysical implications, before I take another look at the status of the constitution of bodies and the way they prefigure specific differences in the affective and perceptive life of individuals belonging to different species.

Perhaps the most surprising use of the notion of form is to be found in Part One of the *Ethics*, where, in E1p8s2, Spinoza criticizes those who do not pay sufficient attention to the true nature of things or who rely on the machinations of their imagination. He writes:

> [F]or those who do not know the true causes of things confuse everything and without any conflict of mind feign that both trees and men speak, imagine that men are formed both from stones and from seed, and *that any form whatever is changed into any other*. (C 1:412–413/G 1:49; my emphasis)

Even though the notion of 'man' might not be based on one or several clearly identifiable, essential properties amounting to a species notion, Spinoza indicates in this passage that there is a limitation or principal boundary between kinds of things that cannot be crossed however profound a change in the individual may be. In this way, he rules out that transformation—literally: a change in form—is possible. Hence, even though he does not refer to this limitation in terms of species, he supposes that there are kinds of things which differ in a manner that allows only for a certain degree of change or modification, but not for genuine transformation.[13] And this fundamental limitation is captured, although arguably in a somewhat muddled manner, by the notion 'form'.

Taking Spinoza's metaphysical gradualism into account, this opposition to transformation or metamorphosis is surprising as it goes beyond the question of identifying individuals as similar simply by their ratio: What metaphysical concept or tenet is there that would preclude the continual change from an individual of a certain complexity or perfection to another? The answer to this question given by more traditional accounts of species is not available to Spinoza. On an Aristotelian view what happens in metamorphosis is the replacement of a form of substance (i.e. of a substantial form) with another such form, and we have, after this exchange of forms has taken place, every right to speak of a new being that has

[13] In CM (2.4), Spinoza explicates this distinction between change and transformation: "By *Change* we understand here whatever variation there can be in a subject while the very essence of the subject remains intact; commonly the term is taken in an even broader sense, signifying the corruption of things, not an absolute corruption but one which at the same time includes the generation following corruption, as when we say that peat is changed into ashes, or men into beasts. But Philosophers use a different term to denote this, viz. *Transformation*" (C 1:321/G 1:255).

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been generated or that came into existence. Such a change of form always issues in a new being and thus a fundamental change of an individual is precluded. But to suggest that there is an ontological component in the composition of individuals that could be replaced by another component with the same ontological status, but requiring or leading to a different complexity and thus to a new kind of individual, is out of the question in Spinoza's metaphysics. After all, there are only bodies and their minds, which are themselves nothing but ideas of the bodies, but there are no forms in the sense that they—as Aristotelian substantial forms do—inform bodies and at the same time differentiate them from each other. Rather, if there is only a distinction by degree of complexity, nothing seems to preclude a gradual change in complexity from one kind of being to another.

Thus, if Spinoza's suggestion of a general impossibility of transformation is taken seriously, some explanation for this claim is needed—and, indeed, another option is available. Recall, to begin with, that if individuals are distinguishable by different ratios of motion and rest and divided into kinds by degrees of compositional complexity, there seems to be no good reason why transformation, that is, change from an individual with a certain particular form to another, should not be possible by a process of gradual change. This transformation seems at least conceivable, if not as an instantaneous, at least as a continuous change.

At this point, however, it is worthwhile taking the character of Spinoza's physics in view and discerning two levels of statements it may be taken to make. As has been argued, Spinoza conceives the 'Physical Digression' as providing only a preliminary sketch of his physics rather than a full-fledged physical theory or even science.[14] Spinoza responds to Tschirnhaus, who asked for an elaboration of the physical theory of the *Ethics*, that the things "concerning motion and Method [. . .] aren't yet written out in an orderly fashion" (Letter 60, C 1:433/G 4:271). Taking this seriously, we should refrain from reading his gradualism as constituting a part of an elaborated account of nature. It is rather a principle that anticipates a yet to be developed physical theory.

If this describes its status appropriately, we can say: it is one thing to model the spectrum of possible distinctions as coming in degrees, but it is another to apply this model to account for the natural things we observe. In other words: the claim that differentiation comes in degrees does not, by itself, entail the further claim that individuals of all degrees also exist in nature. There might be various conceivable individuals whose existence is prohibited by those who are in existence.[15] How would this preclude transformation? If Spinoza's system, as I have argued, has no room for instantaneous change from one kind of individual to one with a

[14] See Peterman, "The 'Physical Interlude", pp. 119–120.

[15] The grounds for this claim are already found in E1p11 and expounded in E1p33. For an insightful discussion of the possible reasons for the non-existence of possible individuals, see Newlands, "The Harmony of Spinoza and Leibniz".

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different *forma*, then any such change would have to be continuous. Now, if the make-up of the physical world is such that gaps arise simply because the existence of some conceivable individuals in this continuum is thwarted by other individuals that are in existence, then a continuous change through these conceivable but non-existent individuals is thwarted too. This reasoning would provide Spinoza with the argumentative resources to maintain a gradual distinction between individuals while at the same time being able to claim that transformation is impossible. Someone might object that this is not deduced from Spinoza's fundamental metaphysical assumptions, which do not in and of themselves preclude transformation. Yet this impossibility is affirmed by Spinoza and, surely, also entrenched in our experience of the world.

2.3 From Form to Perfection: The Human Body as the Object of the Mind

So far, we have seen that there is evidence in Spinoza's writings that, despite his rejection of the Aristotelian concept of substantial forms, he seems to accept the idea of a vaguer sort of specific difference and thus of there being, in a genuine sense, natural kinds of things. These assumptions, we have further noticed, are also present in Spinoza's denial of transformation. In addition, we have also seen how these assumptions may be reconciled with the gradualist approach Spinoza obviously also maintains.

With these insights in mind, it is time to take a closer look at a few passages where the idea of a 'form of man' is entertained. Just shortly before the question of body is addressed, Spinoza shows, on a general level, what the form of man consists in as well as what it does not consist in, when he claims in E2p10: "The being of substance does not pertain to the essence of man, or substance does not constitute the form of man" (C 1:454/G 2:92). The demonstration for this proposition is straightforward: Were the essence of man to involve the being of substance, and given that substance exists on Spinoza's view necessarily, man would also exist necessarily. This, however, would violate E2a1, which states that "the essence of man does not involve necessary existence" (C 1:447/G 2:85). Now it may seem that—drawing on the difference between the existence of infinite things and the existence of finite things, and establishing a set of negative claims only—this does not really matter for the problem of kinds of things. This changes, however, if we consider in addition the corollary to this proposition, where Spinoza concludes that "the essence of [a] man is constituted by certain modifications of God's attributes" (C 1:454/G 2:93). Note that since there are no articles in Latin, it is not clear from the wording of this corollary whether the issue at hand is human nature as such or the singular essences of individual humans. In any case, what Spinoza states here is crucial insofar as it makes way for a particular argumentative route to his

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later discussion of the constitution of both minds and bodies. When it comes to people (and by extension: all finite things), there is not only multiplicity, but also diversity.[16] And while these facts can be viewed as in urgent need of further explanation, given E2p10, this explanation cannot possibly be stated in terms of the category of substance, but it must be given by an analysis of those modifications of God's attributes at stake in the constitution of the individual or kind at hand.[17] In particular, since there are only two attributes that are essential for humans, what is needed are explanations in terms of the modifications of extension (or the constitution of bodies) as well as of thought (or the constitution of minds).

Unfortunately, as we have already observed, anything that is said here about the existence, essence, or constitution of humans holds also for the existence, essence, or constitution of other kinds of individuals we encounter in the world, be those animals, plants, stones, or coffee mugs. And this problem continues to linger even after Spinoza claims in E2p13 that "[t]he object of the idea constituting the human Mind is [a/the] Body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else" (C 1:457/G 2:96). As already noted, the mere possession of a mind is not sufficient for claiming that the individual at hand is a human, since, as the following scholium states, "the things we have shown so far are completely general and do not pertain more to man than to other Individuals, all of which, though in different degrees, are nevertheless animate" (C 1:457/G 2:96). Spinoza's gradualism poses thus not only a problem for the assumption of species, but also, and more pressingly, for the idea of human nature and the role it plays with respect to considerations concerning the good life for us. Is there a way out of this?

At this point it is worthwhile taking a closer look at the passage immediately following the introduction of his gradualism. Spinoza points out the following:

> However, we also cannot deny that ideas differ among themselves, as the objects themselves do, and that one is more excellent than the other, and contains more reality, just as the object of the one is more excellent than the object of the other and contains more reality. And so to determine what is the difference between the human Mind and the others, and how it surpasses them, it is necessary for us, as we have said, to know the nature of its object, i.e., of the human Body. [. . .] Nevertheless, I say this in general, that in proportion as a Body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once, so its Mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once. (E2p13s, C 1:458/G 2:97)

[16] See Julie Klein's contribution to this volume, but recall also, for example, the Appendix to Part One, where Spinoza states that "[a]lthough human bodies agree in many things, they still differ in very many" (C 1:445/G 2:82–83).

[17] For an account of this, see Renz, "Finite Subjects in the Ethics: Spinoza on Indexical Knowledge, the First Person and the Individuality of Human Minds," and Renz, *Explainability of Experience*, pp.142–167.

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Spinoza stresses here that the difference between kinds goes along with a difference in the degree of their excellence. This is, he assumes, what eventually allows for determining the difference between human and other minds. Based on this he establishes that the human mind is more capable, perfect, or excellent due to its object (the human body) being more complex.

All this is, again, perfectly in line with the idea that things are different by degree rather than by kind, here merely additionally spelled out in terms of reality and perfection. The 'Physical Digression' that follows this passage might therefore be viewed as an attempt to get a better grasp not only of what it means to be an individual body, but also of how bodies of higher complexity come about, beginning with the explanation of the individuation of 'simplest bodies', followed by that of compound bodies, and culminating in the human body. It is also in line with the fact that, in this passage, Spinoza develops a couple of scenarios in which some change occurs in an individual body without leading to a change of form of the individual. I have already invoked the lemmas, where these scenarios come up for the first time, in connection with our consideration of Spinoza's use of the term 'forma'. What I would like to emphasize now is that in elaborating on the question of how it is possible that an individual may retain its form while undergoing change, Spinoza draws particular attention to the obvious fact that bodies can replace parts, grow, and move only parts of their whole bodies as well as their whole bodies.

Spinoza's interest in changes bodies may undergo while retaining their nature and in the diverse ways in which individuals can sustain themselves has been noticed by Hans Jonas, who suggested that Spinoza shows here primarily an interest in organic bodies. For Jonas, each such body is characterized by a "total form of multiple inner relations [which] maintains itself functionally in the interactions of the compound with the outside world"[18] and "an organic individual is viewed as a fact of wholeness rather than of mechanical interplay of parts".[19] For Jonas, therefore, the focus in the Digression is not the founding of a physics, but providing a foundation for a theory that makes room for organic bodies as a core piece of the metaphysical system. Perhaps one does not need to go as far as Jonas suggests and to interpret Spinoza's claims here as a precursor of a theory of organisms, but it seems clear that Spinoza's understanding of complex wholes goes beyond concerns regarding their mere compositionality. This is supported by the scholium following lemma 7:

> But if we should further conceive a third kind of Individual, composed [NS: of many individuals] of this second kind [ST: i.e. those of different natures], we shall find that it can be affected in many *other* ways, without any change of its form.

[18] Jonas, "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism", p. 48.
[19] Ibid., p. 50.

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> And if we proceed in this way to infinity, we shall easily conceive that the whole of nature is one Individual, whose parts, i.e., all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole Individual. (C 1:461-62/G 2:101-02)

Spinoza supposes here that different kinds of individuals are divided according to their complexity, which he spells out in terms of the composition of parts of different natures. At first sight, one might be tempted to view the picture presented here as one of simple composition, that is, as if the human body were a highly complex construct composed out of smaller bodies, which are themselves composed out of smaller bodies. What guarantees then that there is a body in front of us is that there is a fixed ratio of motion and rest between the constituent parts of this body.

But it is not as simple for Spinoza, because the constitution of a complex whole is not reducible to its composition, as there is a certain relativity as to what is considered to be a part and what is considered to be a whole. Taking a closer look at the passage just quoted, we can at least surmise that the constitution of complex wholes is also a matter of the kinds or natures of parts out of which a larger individual is composed, which in turn have an influence on how these parts behave in situations of collision with other individuals. That this is indeed what Spinoza assumes is corroborated by the following passage from a letter to Oldenburg, where he writes:

> By the coherence of parts, then, I understand nothing but that the laws or nature of the one part adapts itself to the laws or the nature of the other part so that they are opposed to each other as little as possible. Concerning whole and parts, I consider things as parts of some whole to the extent that the nature of the one adapts itself to that of the other so that they [A: all] agree with one another as far as possible. But insofar as they disagree with one another, to that extent each forms in our mind an idea distinct from the others, and therefore it is considered as a whole and not as a part. (Letter 32, C2:18/G IV 170–171)

Apparently, constitution of any whole by its parts is not just a matter of composition, but also a question of features such as coherence and adaptation, and such features come in degrees. We can thus say that there are irreducibly qualitative differences for Spinoza, and this not just on the surface, that is with respect to the nature of complex wholes, but already on the level of their constituent parts: there is more or less agreement which is dependent on the specific natures of the bodies under consideration.

Extending this analysis to individuals who are constituted by such bodily wholes, for example humans, we can also say that they, too, form a whole in virtue of a certain agreement. In the case of humans, an individual has parts that agree insofar as they are considered under a certain standard, such as 'human', or insofar as they allow it to achieve certain things that humans are apt to achieve. Reading the

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'Digression' with this in mind reveals further support for the richness of the idea of form that also allows us to capture such a standard and provides reason to think that Spinoza entertains the idea of kinds in general and of 'human' in particular. Thus, when he writes that "[n]othing can agree more with the nature of any thing than other individuals of the same species" (E4appIX, C 1:589/G 2:68), such that the agreement of humans consists in the aptitude and ability to do certain things, which is in turn grounded in their bodily composition, he sorts them under a particular form and it is under this consideration in the first place that each of them can be viewed as a human individual. While such a notion of form allows for a certain variation, and even importantly so due to the body's embeddedness in the world and its constant interaction with other bodies, it also allows for the increase or decrease in striving of the mind and in activity of the body without changing the individual's nature, that is, without requiring us to talk about a new kind of individual every time such a change occurs. Although it is not a definite particular ratio that can be claimed to be a property that is common to all humans and to separate them sharply from other kinds of individuals, it picks out a range of a certain type of structure of complexity (and not a mere degree of complexity) and aptitude to achieve certain things and to have certain goals, and it is only this structure that allows for specifically human experiences, that is, for the possession of a specifically human mind. This does not mean that we have to include every property found among the members of a kind as relevant to a specific form, but rather only those properties that supervene directly on a specific form and that are, in addition, of relevance for a particular standard or aptitude. It is our form that allows us to consider ourselves to be of a specific kind, to consider others as sufficiently similar to us to be of the same kind, but also to consider ourselves as well as others to be capable of certain things and as having certain perfections. In a sense, it is the notion of form that captures the most important facets of our 'humanity'.

2.4 Species, Forms, and Lifeforms

Let's return to the claim of E3p57, where Spinoza said that "each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other", which is also why he assumes that "the Lusts and Appetites of Insects, fish, and birds must vary" (C 1:528/G 2:187). I have quoted this proposition in Section 1 when I elaborated on the way in which Spinoza's view on the existence of species aligns itself with the Aristotelian tradition as well as on the ways in which it does not. In Section 2, I have pointed out how Spinoza's assumption of species is connected with the notion of a determinate ratio of motion of rest and then argued, in Section 3, that this also comprises all those particular aptitudes that qualify or shape the existence of each individual of a kind. Re-reading E3p57

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against this background, we can now see how reference to the same idea—that all individuals are determined in both their singular essence and their specific nature by a determinate ratio of motion and rest—helps address several different questions. It not only establishes the identity of individual bodies over time, but it also grounds the idea of natural kinds and even corroborates the stipulation of particular kinds. Considering the constitution of complex individuals, it can also account for the richness of their experiences by relating them to the specific abilities of their bodies and minds. Hence, the ratio of each human individual, that is, that which is captured by notion of 'form', defines the individual's identity with itself, its relation with the human species, as well as the potentials of its (future) life; and it does so in a manner that allows for reconciling Spinoza's gradualist intuitions with the assumption of more or less clear-cut as well as specific differences. Some might object that this does not eliminate all tensions, given my proposal rests on speculative grounds, but it does, I contend, at least mitigate them substantially. I will therefore discuss, in the remainder of this chapter, how this understanding of the human kind or form would have implications for the specific differences of individual lives, or, in other words, would give rise to differences in lifeforms.

Comprising its capacities and abilities, the form of each human being not only relates it to its kind or species, but captures at the same time the limits within which its development can take place. This means that specific experiences, as particular to a specific form, can only be had—and therefore possibly only be understood—within a specific perspective, that is, by individuals which have the ability to have experiences of a specific kind and which are therefore acquainted with the same kind of experience or at least with experiences that are sufficiently similar. Hence radical change or transformation, were it possible, would also be a transformative change in the subject's experience. What does this amount to? My point here is that even if one accepted (which, as I have argued, one does not need to accept as Spinoza's view) that it was metaphysically possible for an individual body to change its form, for example to change from human to horse, it seems impossible to have this change reflected in the individual's mind. That means that in such a case we cannot speak any longer of the *same* individual in any relevant sense. This shows that genuine endurance does not rely on the possession of particular individual ideas and memories, but rather on the range of possible experiences and abilities, which at the same time also excludes all those experiences that cannot possibly be had by an individual in virtue of its belonging to a certain kind. This role of form is thus constitutive for one's remaining the same individual, and this in an existential way.

That this corresponds with Spinoza's outlook is supported by his brief comments on the nature of death. Having argued, in E4p38, that "those things are good which bring about the preservation of the proportion of motion and rest the human Body's parts have to one another; on the other hand, those things are evil

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which bring it about that the parts of the human Body have a different proportion of motion and rest to one another" (E4p39, C 1:568/G 2:239), he continues in the scholium:

> But here it should be noted that I understand the Body to die when its parts are so disposed that they acquire a different proportion of motion and rest to one another. For I dare not deny that—even though the circulation of the blood is maintained, as well as the other [signs] on account of which the Body is thought to be alive—the human Body can nevertheless be changed into another nature entirely different from its own. For no reason compels me to maintain that the Body does not die unless it is changed into a corpse.
>
> And, indeed, experience seems to urge a different conclusion. Sometimes a man undergoes such changes that I should hardly have said he was the same man. I have heard stories, for example, of a Spanish Poet who suffered an illness; though he recovered, he was left so oblivious to his past life that he did not believe the tales and tragedies he had written were his own. He could surely have been taken for a grown-up infant if he had also forgotten his native language (E4p39s, C 1:569/G 2:240).

Spinoza assigns here primacy to form as the principle that guides the attribution of continued existence as the same individual. This is what leads him to reject (a) that a lack of outwardly visible changes is sufficient to judge if an individual continues as itself, and to maintain (b) that knowledge of its own form is necessary for the individual itself to judge or consider herself to be the same individual.[20]

At this point, it might be worthwhile to remember that the central passage with which I started this section, that is, the passage in which Spinoza mentions the difference between equine and human lust, is followed by the claim that from this proposition (E3p57) equally follows that "there is no small difference between the gladness by which a drunk is led and the gladness a philosopher possesses" (C 1:528/G 2:187). Should we then have to claim that Spinoza has an important distinction between a drunk and a philosopher in mind? Yes, in a certain sense this is the case: taking the 'human form' and its accompanying specific abilities as a standard, it is indeed the case that the philosopher is of greater excellence than the drunk. But in order to make this claim, it is already presumed that both the drunk and the philosopher are to be judged under the standard of 'human', in which case knowledge of the 'human form' is required.

[20] This passage (E4p39s) is often discussed as disclosing Spinoza's view on personal identity (see, e.g. Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, p. 259; Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics*, p. 270), but this does not contradict the claim that identity of the individual, as an individual of a specific kind, is not only not tied to personal identity, but rather forms its basis.

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To conclude we can say that the idea of there being species-related forms of life not only distinguishes humans from horses or fish, but also provides the reason why a philosopher is a more perfect human than a drunk; and it explains why the horse does not and never will know what it is like to be a drunk or a philosopher.

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3

Non-Essentialist, Activity-Grounded Lifeforms

Barnaby R. Hutchins

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Introduction

In action-theoretic—and, broadly speaking, biological—contexts, lifeforms are invoked in order to explain, in various ways, what a thing does.[1] Humans do what they do, in the ways that they do, because of an underlying lifeform. Ants do very different things, very differently, from us because their lifeform differs significantly from ours. The lifeform is the background against which actions make sense: it makes a lot of sense for a human to, say, change a light bulb; for an ant, that would be a little strange. This can be cashed out in various ways—in terms of the role of artificial light in current human life, in terms of our opposable thumbs that allow us to actually get hold of the thing to change it, and so on. In these contexts, when we talk about lifeforms, we talk about them as the grounds of actions.

There are some good reasons to see something like this lifeform concept[2] as being at work in Spinoza's system (even though he does not use the term itself), especially when he makes claims such as, "[n]othing can agree more with the nature of any thing than other individuals of the same species" (E4appIX; C 1:589/G 2:268), or in many of his references to "form". But Spinoza denies real universals, denies that commonalities pertain to the essences of singular things (E2P37), and endorses gradualism about bodies (i.e., there are no hard boundaries between natural kinds, and seemingly no ontological resources to institute them).

So, there is some puzzle about the role of something like a lifeform in what we might broadly, and maybe inaccurately, call Spinoza's philosophy of action—a puzzle that warrants addressing. This is an issue of what the notion of lifeform can

[1] This research was funded in whole, or in part, by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [doi: 10.55776/P29072].

[2] I use "lifeform" here—a term that Spinoza never uses—because this chapter is ultimately concerned with the action-theoretic context. To the extent to which my reading works for lifeform, though, it should extend more or less straightforwardly to certain senses of "species", and somewhat less straightforwardly, "form"—terms that Spinoza does *occasionally* use in appropriate contexts.

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do for a reading of Spinoza; there is also the issue of what Spinoza can do for the notion of lifeform.

Work on lifeforms in philosophy usually starts from a broadly Aristotelian (or, in some cases, Hegelian) framework, and usually assumes some nontrivial degree of essentialism[3]: humans do humane things because of some underlying essential human lifeform; sharks do sharkish things because of some underlying essential shark lifeform; etc. Analysis of action in terms of lifeform is useful, but it would be nice, in various ways, if it could come without essentialist commitments attached.

Spinoza's commitments to gradualism and merely nominal universals more or less rule out essentialism for something-like-a-lifeform. This is precisely the reason that the role played by lifeforms in Spinoza's system is so difficult to pin down: intuitively, lifeforms seem as though they should entail essence.[4] To seek out a conception of lifeform in a non-essentialist context, thus, feels like a category mistake. So, if Spinoza does indeed have a coherent conception of lifeform that is capable of playing an appropriate action-theoretic role, it breaks the expected entailment from lifeform to essence. And, in that case, Spinoza gives us a non-essentialist way of addressing and employing lifeforms. For exactly the reason that the issue of lifeform in Spinoza's system is tricky, it is a valuable resource.

3.1 Grounding Lifeforms

In the Aristotelian framework, you get (life-)forms for free, as part of the basic ontology. Consequently, you do not need to find something else to which to reduce them. In a more austere framework like Spinoza's, by contrast, you will not find anything like lifeforms anywhere within the fundamental ontology: you have to build them out of more fundamental entities; whatever a lifeform is, it is going to have to be reducible to something else.

The obvious place to look for a reductionist account is morphology—something about the structure of bodies gives them the kind of lifeform they have. This accords with intuitions about, for example, opposable thumbs and light bulbs. It also fits with Spinoza's explanation of "the difference between the human mind and the others, and how it surpasses them" (E2p13s; C 1:458/G 2:97) in terms of the complexity of the human body: there is seemingly something about the constitution of the human body that differentiates humans from other lifeforms.

The most likely candidates for a morphological reading seem to be either morphological complexity (such that a lifeform comprises a certain region in the continuum of complexity) or extrinsic denomination (i.e., as the "model of human

[3] See, e.g., Foot, *Natural Goodness*; Jaeggi, *Critique of Forms of Life*; Thompson, *Life and Action*.

[4] Typically, we would say that a shark does sharkish things precisely because it is a shark; the lifeform is taken to be prior to the actions, and being a shark is taken to be part of the individual shark's essence.

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nature which we may look to" (E4Pref; C 1:545/G 2:208)). The former seems insufficiently robust, especially for the sake of the explanatory role that lifeforms take in action theory and ethics: what determines the degree of complexity at which one lifeform turns into another? This is the gradualism problem in a nutshell. It also contravenes Spinoza's proscription of commonalities in the essences of singular things.

The extrinsic option has the advantage of embracing the ad-hocness that would undermine a complexity account: I can stipulate that things that look roughly like *this*—say, have two legs and no feathers—are humans; you might disagree. In which case, the grouping under the lifeform "human" itself is grounded in my mind rather than in humans themselves. This might well be perfectly adequate for analytical means—arbitrary groupings can be useful analytic tools—but insufficient for lifeforms, understood in this way, to have an explanatory role: we cannot say *x* ϕs *because* it is human, if our criteria for grouping *x* as human bottom out at "because I said so".

I am not going to argue that there is no workable way whatsoever to ground a notion of lifeform in morphology for Spinoza; indeed, Tropper's chapter in this volume goes somewhat in that direction. Rather, I am going to argue for an alternative possibility: there are useful resources for grounding lifeform to be found in activities (what singular things *do*); and an activities-grounded, or activity-priority, reading fits well with the textual evidence and the ways in which Spinoza employs something-like-a-lifeform. Moreover, and ultimately more germane to my purposes here, an activity-priority reading is exactly the sort of reading that allows for a realist, nonessentialist conception of lifeform, in which lifeforms get to be real and nontrivial aspects of the world, while still being fundamentally mutable.

Trying to talk about what something *does* is oddly tricky in Spinoza's system. Spinoza talks about "actions", but, strictly speaking, Spinozistic actions can only be "doings" that are grounded in reason; "action" is too narrow a category for my purposes here. Conceptually, "motions" would probably do the job, but the term is intuitively jarring: intuitively, we tend to think of motion in terms of local motion; this chapter is about more than just local motion, so what is connoted is again too narrow, even if "motion" does denote the correct set of things in principle. It is for these reasons that I have gone with "activities". By "activity", I mean simply what things do, or modal change, and I mean to avoid the restrictive implications of "actions" and "motions", while incurring as little linguistic awkwardness as possible.

It might seem strange to ground something like lifeform in something like activity. Typically, we think of activities as derivatives of more fundamental entities. We tend to think of them as *changes* in *bodies*, and we tend to think that the bodies persist while their activities change. On this understanding, activities are both ontologically posterior to bodies and, more or less, ephemeral, making them a seemingly rather poor choice as grounds for anything much at all.

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More specifically, and perhaps tellingly, we tend to think of activities as—or on the model of—modes of substances. If we think of bodies as substances, then of course we would expect bodies to be grounds. And, if a lifeform is taken to be some kind of constraint to activity, of course the notion of activities as grounds would look incoherent. Within a lot of frameworks, the substantival model of body–activity relations is apt enough: it obviously works for the Aristotelian framework, is canonical for the Cartesian framework, and seems to track most materialisms and physicalisms.

It is not clear, though, that this is an intuition that ought to apply to Spinoza's system, where bodies and activities are equally modal. While an argument could presumably be made that (modal) activities are still supposed to be only derivative of (modal) bodies, such that there are necessary and consistent intramodal priority relations between bodies and activities, there does not seem to be anything in Spinoza's system to compel that reading; nor does there seem to be much to support such a reading, beyond trying to preserve our intuitions. Indeed, if conatus is understood dynamically, then such priority relations cannot obtain (see Section 3). Consequently, for the sake of this chapter, I assume that bodies and activities are modes fundamentally on the same level, and that, whatever a lifeform might be, it can just as plausibly be grounded in activity as in body.

There are at least two, related, issues raised by this use of "activity". First, if an activity is what something does, this sounds suspiciously substantival: there is some *thing* that does some *activity*. If what we are concerned with is specifically the activity *of* things, then the things look very much as though they ought to be the grounds again. Here, I argue that, while particular activities are necessarily in relation with particular bodies, and while the particularity of both is salient to the role of lifeform, this does not in any way mean that the bodies involved have ontological priority over the activities involved.

The second issue is that, if the term "activity" allows for a wider scope than "action", then it looks as though we are allowing externally determined motions into the picture, which seems to go against at least some of what Spinoza says about activity in relation to something-like-a-lifeform. This is a feature, not a bug (and I argue as much, in terms of the sociality of lifeforms in Section 5). To assume that the relevant activities for grounding a lifeform are only those that are internally determined is to beg the question on the essentialist's behalf: it is to assume that only what follows from the essence of a thing is informative about its lifeform.

3.2 Lifeform and Agreement

Spinoza uses something like a notion of lifeform most explicitly in Part Four of the *Ethics*, in the context of the discussion of inter-human relations. In the appendix to Part Four, he claims that "[n]othing can agree [*convenire*] more with the nature of

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any thing than other individuals of the same species" (E4appIX; C 1:589/G 2:268). A natural reading of this passage—that is, a natural reading given substantivalist intuitions—might be that there is some phenomenon called "agreement" that is grounded in some property called "species": on this reading, "species" pre-exists, and is more fundamental than, "agreement", such that we can have species without actual, explicit agreement (say, if the members of the species are dispersed here and there without meeting); in other words, species enables, but does not require, agreement.

What I am proposing here is an inversion of the grounding relations in the above reading: it is not that species grounds agreement; rather, agreement is what grounds species. To (metaphysically) explain what species—or, in the terms I am using here, lifeform—is, we look to agreement, rather than the other way around. Read in this way, the point in E4appIX is not that these particular things agree with each other because they are all elements of the same species-set, but that they are elements of the same set of things just *because* they maximally agree: membership status is established in terms of agreement, and a lifeform just is a set of whatever things maximally agree with one another (in some as-yet-unspecified way). This is what an agreement-priority conception of lifeform consists in.

Below, I argue that we can define agreement in terms of usefulness, such that we can identify the members of a species or lifeform as those singular things for which a given set of activities is maximally useful. Let's say that there are some activities, performed in certain ways, that are more useful to me (or, more precisely, to the activities that I typically partake in) than others are; those activities constitute my lifeform. And if the same activities are also of maximal utility to you, then we share a lifeform.

There does not seem to be anything in E4appIX that compels taking one interpretation over another, substantival intuitions aside. But the advantage of the agreement-priority reading over the species-priority reading is that it provides a means of addressing the thorny species problem, rather than simply throwing us back into the thorns. It does, however, raise the issue of what exactly agreement might be: if a species is a set of things that maximally agree, what is it that they maximally agree in, or, for that matter, on?

3.3 Agreement and Usefulness

What E4appIX summarizes is E4p35c1: "what is most useful to man is what most agrees [*convenit*] with his nature (by P31C), that is (as is known through itself), man" (E4p35c1; C 1:563/G 2:233). The overall point here is broadly the same as in the passage from E4appIX, albeit restricted to the human case. But it adds an extra layer: usefulness. The relationship between usefulness and agreement could again be read in a few different ways: (a) the agreement could ground, or explain, the

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usefulness; or (b) the usefulness could ground the agreement; or (c) the two could be mutually implicated or, ultimately, ontologically identical. I am going to argue for the latter, and for the added bonus that Spinoza's discussion of usefulness is informative about agreement.

Now, admittedly, (a) does, on the face of it, look like the more promising option in light of the text: the discussion of agreement in E4p35 is tied to reason, and reason is ultimately tied to a thing's own essence, such that, when a thing acts from reason, it acts from what is inherent to it (E3p4–7). On top of that, in the second corollary to E4p35, Spinoza explicitly equates usefulness to egoism: "[w]hen each man most seeks his own advantage for himself, then men are most useful to one another", where a person's seeking their own advantage consists in "acting according to the laws of his own nature" (C 1:563/G 2:233). This does sound as though usefulness is being explained in terms of agreement, and agreement in terms of similarity in some pre-existing essence.

However, the essence, or nature, in question here is the "actual essence" of the thing, or its conatus (E3p7).[5] The conatus of a thing is active and dynamic; it is the "power of each thing, *or* the striving by which it (either alone or with others) does anything, or strives to do anything" (E3p7; C 1:499/G 2:146), which is merely "distinguished by reason, or rather verbally", and is not "in any way really distinct" (CM 1.6; C 1:314/G 1:248), from the thing itself, or from its essence.[6]

The point here is that a thing's actual essence is not ontologically distinct from its activity: there is no pre-existing essence that subsequently determines activity; rather, acting in such-and-such a way just is having such-and-such an essence, and having such-and-such an essence just is acting in such-and-such a way. In which case, the actual essence cannot be ontologically, or logically, prior to the activity, and neither of the two can be *the* explanation of the other—what you are does explain what you do, but only insofar as what you do explains what you are.

This mutual implication structure is replicated in E4p31c, which is the passage referenced in E4p35c1 in relation to agreement and usefulness:

> [f]rom this it follows that the more a thing agrees with our nature, the more useful, *or* better, it is for us, and conversely, the more a thing is useful to us, the more it agrees with our nature. (C 1:561/G 2:230)

[5] I am concerned here only with actual essence, and am leaving aside the issue of whether there is a "formal essence" beyond the actual essence. See, e.g., Lærke, "Aspects of Spinoza's Theory of Essence"; Nadler, "Spinoza's Monism and the Reality of the Finite"; Ward, "Spinoza on the Essences of Modes."

[6] On the dynamic reading of the conatus, see, e.g., Williams, "Revisiting Spinoza's Concept of Conatus: Degrees of Autonomy"; Renz, *The Explainability of Experience: Realism and Subjectivity in Spinoza's Theory of the Human Mind*, Part 4, Chapter 13; for contrasting readings, see, e.g., Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, Chapter 10; Della Rocca, "Spinoza's Metaphysical Psychology"; Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*.

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This is a reasonably clear statement of mutual implication: it tells us that *if greater agreement, then greater utility* is equivalent to *if greater utility, then greater agreement*. In itself, though, the passage is fairly inconclusive with respect to ontological identity—assuming $p \leftrightarrow q$, the statement will hold without needing to take p and q to be really identical. But, in light of conatus–actual-essence identity, there seems to be more than just biconditionality at stake here.

E4p31dem explicitly refers back to the conatus doctrine (through E3p6), as the basis from which the corollary follows: that is, given the account of the conatus, it follows that usefulness and agreement are mutually implied. Moreover, E4p31 correlates agreement not just with usefulness (and vice versa), but also with goodness: E4p31 itself reads "*[i]nsofar as a thing agrees with our nature, it is necessarily good*" (C 1:560/G 2:229). This initial correlation between agreement and goodness turns into a statement of identity in E4p31c: "[. . .] that which agrees with our nature, *that is* (by P31), [. . .] the good" (C 1:561/G 2:203; my emphasis). Given that Spinoza justifies the identification of agreement and goodness by appeal to E4p31 itself, it seems as though the implication between agreement and goodness in the proposition is to be understood as an identity rather than a mere correlation: the good just is what agrees with our nature, and what agrees with our nature just is the good.

This identity statement is then used as the basis for a restatement of the correlation between agreement and usefulness: the corollary continues, "[n]othing, therefore, can be good except insofar as it agrees with our nature. So the more a thing agrees with our nature, the more useful it is, *and conversely*, q.e.d" (E4p31c; C 1:561/G 2:203; my emphasis). Evidently, the good is identified with agreement, which is, at the very least, correlated with usefulness. This fits in well with Spinoza's definition of the good: "[b]y good I shall understand what we certainly know to be *useful* to us" (E4def1; C 1:546/G 2:209; my emphasis). As Spinoza characterizes it, then, we have good reason to take goodness to be really identical with usefulness.

In the *Metaphysical Thoughts*, this understanding of goodness is also specifically linked to the conatus, where Spinoza criticizes those who "labour under a false prejudice" in taking there to be such a thing as an absolute, "Metaphysical good" (CM 1.6; C 1:314/G 1:248). This is the same passage as mentioned earlier, in which Spinoza classifies the distinction between a thing and its conatus as merely verbal: the real identity of thing and conatus is emphasized there in order to defend the position that there is no good beyond what a thing strives for (CM 1.6; C 1:313/G 1:247)—to take the good to be ontologically distinct from a thing's conatus, and from the thing itself, is to "confuse a distinction of reason with a real or modal distinction" (CM 1.6; C 1:314/G 1:248).

From E3p7, we can say that a thing's actual essence and its conatus are identical. From the *Metaphysical Thoughts*, we get that goodness is merely verbally distinct from both a thing's conatus and from the thing itself. E4def1 identifies goodness with usefulness. And E4p31 identifies goodness with agreement. What this gives

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us is a variety of transitive routes for concluding that usefulness and agreement are indeed really identical—and are also identical to goodness, conatus, and actual essence.

Perhaps this does not sound very helpful: we were looking to usefulness and agreement as means to ground a notion of lifeform, and we ended up with the actual essence of a singular thing, and with a whole lot of seemingly useful distinctions being eroded into identity. In other words, we seem to be right back at the problem of how to build up a notion of lifeform when all the available ontological resources are singular things.

However, just because some things are really identical, that does not mean that the rational distinctions between them are uninformative.[7] If we talk purely in terms of a singular thing's actual essence, say, we might seem to be talking about something purely intrinsic. The same might, maybe somewhat less easily, be said of conatus.[8] But all this becomes far harder to treat as purely intrinsic if we are looking through the lens of usefulness, agreement, or even the good, all of which seem to have non-trivial relational dependencies—*this other thing* is useful to me, agrees with me, or is good for me.

3.4 Maximality and Mutuality

In Spinoza's strong statement of something-like-a-lifeform in E4p35, he focuses on humans insofar as they "*do* only those things which are good for human nature" (E4p35dem; C 1:563/G 2:233; my emphasis). The concern here is with what humans *do* that is good—ultimately, maximally good—for human nature. Most of the discussion that follows E4p35 focuses on what humans do when they act from reason—that is, on actions rather than the broader category of activities.

Reason is indeed going to have to be significant for the notion of lifeform, at least inasmuch as it constitutes the active, or agential, side of the notion (which is especially relevant for an ethics). But the Spinozistic lifeform also has a patientive side: on Spinoza's account, a lifeform does not consist purely in what an agent does in isolation; what counts is how what is done by agents affects others, such that agency alone is not enough to constitute a lifeform—rather, to be a member of a lifeform is to both act on other members of the lifeform and be acted upon by them.

[7] A distinction of reasoned reason would be genuinely explanatory; a distinction of reasoning reason, merely analytic. Given Spinoza's "or rather verbally" (CM 1.6; C 1:314/G 1:248) comment, the latter seems the more likely option. Both should, I think, work here regardless.

[8] A dynamic conception of conatus rules out exactly this ascription of pure intrinsicality: "the *conatus* principle is an essential characteristic of *all* things and is most usefully conceived *outside* the subject, in the wider context of an ontology of relation" (Williams, "Revisiting Spinoza's Concept of Conatus: Degrees of Autonomy", p. 123). Understood dynamically, conatus has unrestricted arity (i.e., it is relational and takes on any number of relations); understood statically, it is nullary (you get the entirety of the conatus with exactly zero relations) (see footnote 10).

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This much is already implied in the emphasis on agreement in E4p35. But it comes out more explicitly in the scholium, where Spinoza switches to a focus on the passive side of things, specifically in the context of human society and the interactions it entails. He points out that "the society of our fellow men" is useful to us (we get "many more advantages than disadvantages" from it), and that,

> [m]en still find from experience that by helping one another they can provide themselves much more easily with the things they require, and that only by joining forces can they avoid the dangers which threaten on all sides—not to mention that it is much preferable and more worthy of our knowledge to consider the deeds of men, rather than those of the lower animals. (E4p35s; C 1:564/G 2:234)[9]

The sociality illustrated here, along with the underscoring of the passive element in our activity, is already present in the account of the conatus in E3p7, where Spinoza mentions "[. . .] the striving by which it (either alone *or with others*) does anything" (E3p7d; C 1:499/G 2: 146; my emphasis). Of those activities done by singular things, some agree with me, insofar as they are useful to me, or to the things I do.

It is not that I do certain activities from my own inherent nature, that other humans do certain activities from their own inherent natures, and that there is some shared set of properties, underlying our individual natures, that constitutes a general human nature, such that our actions are done independently but happen to agree because they derive from that shared nature.[10] Rather, some activities agree with me, and just insofar as some things produce those activities, and just insofar as I produce equivalently useful activities for those things, those things and I share a nature, or participate in the same lifeform.

Of course, we—and I will restrict the phrasing to the human case here, for the sake of clarity, but the same should apply for any singular thing with a lifeform—are acted upon by a multitude of different things. Many, probably most, of those things are going to be non-human: just because a thing is useful to me, that does not mean we share a lifeform. Many things—water when I am dehydrated, a blanket when it is cold—seem to be good for me without, I take it, sharing my lifeform. So, while everything that acts on me will presumably have to be involved in my own essence, a non-vacuous notion of lifeform will need to be more restrictive.

I take it that instituting such restrictions is precisely what is going on in passages such as the discussion in E4p35: what gets included in the human lifeform are those things for which a particular set of activities is most useful. Thus, all

[9] E4p35s.

[10] As Illari and Williamson, writing in a different context, put it, activities have "unrestricted arity" (Illari and Williamson, "In Defence of Activities", p. 72)—they can be applied to however-many operands. Spinozistic lifeforms seemed to have similarly unrestricted arity; things acting in isolation from purely inherent natures, on the other hand, would be nullary—which is not to say that the activities would have no objects, but that they would not be shared amongst actors.

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those singular things for which human activities are most useful are what we call "human". By contrast, a blanket is very useful for keeping me warm, which is indeed a very useful thing to do, but its usefulness does not extend much beyond that; having only a limited degree of usefulness to me, of agreement with me, the blanket does not share my lifeform.

Furthermore, I do not offer much utility to a blanket; if I happen to further its conatus, it is more or less incidental (there is little I do for a blanket—perhaps I wash it from time to time, but that is probably more to its own detriment than anything, damaging its fibres and its weave until it eventually falls apart). Humans, on the other hand, are precisely those things which do a lot that is useful for me, and for which I do a lot that is useful[11]—not because of some prior essence, but because, on this conception, humans are defined as *whatever fits that description*, that is, those things that perform the activities that are most useful to me and vice versa.

There are cases of greater mutual usefulness than in the blanket case. Humans might well interact with, say, trees, and might well do so in broadly mutually beneficial ways (trees might provide humans with fruit or wood, or simply oxygen; humans might plant or graft trees, protect them from disease, provide them with carbon dioxide, and, by eating their fruit, distribute their seeds; and so on). The case is somewhat less asymmetrical as compared to the blanket case, but the utility of trees for humans is still within a fairly restricted domain, so tree-ish activities are unlikely to be maximally useful to humans. By the same token, human activities are probably not going to be maximally useful to trees (we cut them down to obtain material that is useful to us, after all).

In order to properly restrict what is included in a lifeform, then, and to get the reciprocality implied by "there is nothing more useful to *man* than *man*" (E4p35c1; C 1:563/G 2:233; my emphasis) right, the utility needs to be not only maximal or mutual, but *mutually maximal*.

To be clear, the point here is not that there is some set of singular things called humans that are predisposed to maximally benefit from some set of human activities. Rather, the set of humans is picked out by the set of activities in which they mutually find maximal utility. Of course, there *could well be* some set of features that happens to dispose a given singular thing to be benefited by certain activities, but that would be entirely contingent and incidental to the definition of the lifeform. There need not be any separate, particular, pre-existing property in the thing in virtue of which it benefits most from certain activities in order for a notion of lifeform construed in this way to work: satisfaction of maximal usefulness is,

[11] Which is absolutely not to say that I, specifically, am a great boon to humanity (or rather, any greater than anyone else, since any human is effectively defined as that which is a boon to humanity)—just that the things I do qua human are by definition things that are useful to humans. The more natural way to express this would be in terms of what I, or humans, *can* do, but that phrasing would imply that capacities are what is at stake; but, for an activity-priority reading to work, it has to rely on actual activities.

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presumably, going to be multiply realizable at, say, the morphological level—as I go over in more detail in Section 5.

In this way, agreement gets cashed out, not in terms of shared common properties, but in terms of a distinct state of affairs that obtains *at* each member of the lifeform, but *in relation to* other members of the lifeform. When some singular thing *x* finds mutual maximal usefulness with *y*, *z*, . . ., that is a determinate state of affairs for *x*, rather than some universal that transcends *x*. This produces a notion of lifeform that quantifies across each of its members without contravening the interdiction against commonality pertaining to the essence of a singular things in E2p37—a lifeform pertains to each particular individual, rather than to some wider thing that encompasses them all.

What matters for the notion of lifeform are the mutually maximally useful—with respect to both the agents and patients involved—activities. The big advantage of an activity-priority notion over a morphology-priority notion of lifeform is that the former has a criterion of identification built in. Morphology-priority notions presumably end up having to rely on extrinsic denominations to produce lifeform groupings, at least in an ontology as austere as Spinoza's. For an activity-priority notion, maximal agreement, in terms of maximal mutual usefulness, serves as the identity criterion. It is non-ad hoc, and it is objective, insofar as it involves what actually is maximally useful.[12]

3.5 What about Morphology?

There is an intuitive plausibility to grounding lifeforms in morphology that seems to get lost on an activity-priority conception. Informally, we tend to identify such things by their superficial morphology, such that it is possible to be surprised that a whale is a mammal rather than a very large fish, or that a pumpkin is a berry while a strawberry is, in fact, not. Of course, "correct" scientific species identification will tend to refer to "deeper" morphological features[13] that override the misleading superficial morphology—thus, a whale is not a fish, because it lacks gills (amongst other reasons). An obvious objection to an activity-priority conception of lifeform is that it fails to preserve our intuitions about the centrality of morphology.

[12] In this way, an activity-priority reading allows for robust error conditions in identifying lifeforms: you can be wrong in judging about the identity of a lifeform if you are wrong about what is actually in maximal mutual agreement.

[13] I say "tend to" because morphology is not the only resource used by biologists to make taxonomic distinctions. Etiology is relevant, for example, and DNA is frequently appealed to (we might want to argue that DNA is just a low-level morphology, but it is not on the phenotypic level that we usually refer to as "morphology"). Moreover, activities themselves have significant roles to play: *giving birth to live young* vs *laying eggs*, for instance, might supervene on certain morphological features, but it is the activities that get appealed to in making the distinctions, and not the morphology.

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In itself, this is a fairly toothless objection, in that there is little reason to suppose that a conception of lifeform needs to preserve those intuitions; indeed, it is precisely the point here to look at an alternative to the received view. But it does raise the issue of where exactly morphology is supposed to fit into this model.

In a significant sense, it is misleading to say that pumpkins are berries and strawberries are not. To be sure, a pumpkin is a botanical berry, and a strawberry something else (a botanical aggregate fruit). But a pumpkin is very much not a *culinary* berry, and a strawberry very much is. Culinary kinds tend to be functional kinds, classified, at least in part, with reference to how they are used in the context of eating. Thus, we quite reasonably might think of tomatoes as vegetables, even when they are commonly known to be a (botanical) fruit. In the terminology I have been using here, we could say that what we call vegetables are those things that agree in—that are useful for—certain culinary activities, namely, for the most part, playing certain roles in savoury dishes.

If you forgive the belaboured analogy, the point here is that there are familiar contexts in which we are perfectly comfortable giving classificatory priority to usefulness and agreement in relation to activities, rather than to morphology. That is, there are contexts in which the activity-priority conception is the intuition-preserving position.

Of course, in the culinary case, the utility that is doing the classificatory work is relevant to the cook and the diner; the utility is extrinsically denominated with respect to the actual plants in question. The botanical classification is, in principle at least, supposed to work on bases inherent to the plants themselves. To this extent, the culinary case is a disanalogy with the conception of lifeform that is the concern of this chapter. But the source of the disanalogy lies in the conception of the entities involved: in the contexts of current botanical and culinary sciences, we are not treating the entities they deal with as agents, with their own strivings, in their own rights. We are not concerned with, for example, the utility that pumpkin plants might provide to other pumpkin plants.

In which case, it is no wonder that we either stick to our own extrinsic classifications or we look to static features to try to ground the classification: we, in our current context, do not get to appeal to dynamic, quasi-social agreement between pumpkin plants. That is not the case, however, in Spinoza's system, where everything has its own conatus. As discussed in Section 5, maximal mutual agreement and usefulness provide a built-in objective ground for the ascription of lifeforms.

A secondary objection might be that an activity-priority conception fails to endorse the scientific correction that a whale is not a fish on the basis of morphological differences. Indeed, whale-ish activities presumably agree far more with the activities of various kinds of fish than they do with those of most mammals: if we were to categorize whales purely on grounds of their activities, it is probably fairly

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safe to assume that they would go within the fish group rather than the mammal group.[14]

Interestingly, though, the activity-priority conception does preserve the initial, scientifically naive, intuitions about whales. In fact, despite what I say above, I suspect that it might actually be more accurate to align naive intuitions about whales with activities rather than with morphology: a young child will probably tell you that whales are fish because they live in the sea and swim and "breathe underwater", etc.; they probably will not refer to morphological features, such as the presence of fins. Similarly, biologists might well note the oddity of whales as mammals in terms of their activities:

> [b]ecause of their perfected adaptation to a completely aquatic life, with all its attendant conditions of respiration, circulation, dentition, locomotion, etc., the cetaceans are on the whole the most peculiar and aberrant of mammals.[15]

On this account, whales seem like strange mammals because of what they do, and the ways in which they do it, in accordance with a "completely aquatic life"—we might say that, despite certain morphological similarities with land-dwelling species that we classify as mammalian, whales have an aquatic kind of lifeform.

One upshot that we can see quite clearly from both the culinary and the cetacean cases is that the activities that are salient for a lifeform are multiply realizable through the morphological level. Culinary-vegetable activities can be produced by both botanical-vegetable morphologies and botanical-fruit morphologies; the activities of an aquatic kind of lifeform can be produced by both fish morphologies and mammalian morphologies. That is to say, things can, in principle, maximally agree in their activities while differing significantly in their morphologies.

This means that we can maintain a lifeform without having to be concerned about exactly where morphologies fall, or where to draw the boundaries, within the continuum of Spinoza's gradualist model. It even allows privation cases to be dealt with elegantly. On a morphology-priority conception, when some putative member x of a lifeform K lacks some definitive morphological feature, retaining x within K is not a straightforward problem to solve.

On an activity-priority conception, however, as long as the activities that x *does* perform maximally agree with those performed by the population of K, and as long as the activities performed by the population of K maximally agree with

[14] Note that this objection shifts the discussion up the taxonomic scale. We are no longer talking about species, which is what I am taking to be more or less synonymous with lifeform, and which is the concern of this chapter. Ontological support for wider and wider taxonomic categories is a separate issue, and not one I am attempting to address here. I see no reason why an activity-priority approach could not account for such nesting of lifeforms of increasing generality, though, even if the resultant taxonomy would end up diverging from Linnaean-style systems.

[15] Simpson, "The principles of classification and a classification of mammals", p. 213.

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those performed by *x*, then *x* is still a member of *K*; this holds both if *x* realizes the activities through different means and if *x* cannot produce certain activities at all—the member-of-*K* relation obtains just in case of maximal agreement with the activities that *x* does indeed produce. In other words, not every member of a lifeform needs to yield every activity of the lifeform, because lifeform-membership gets maintained through yielding subsets of lifeform activities. This means that an individual can lose or gain activities without (necessarily) losing its lifeform.

3.6 Conclusion

Appeal to lifeforms is an informative and productive means of explaining the activities of things. It is also a means that Spinoza helps himself to, at various points. On the face of it, though, it is not clear that he is entitled to make use of lifeforms, at least not in an explanatory capacity, given the restrictions his system imposes on universals, on commonalities in the essences of singular things, and on boundaries in the continuum of bodily complexity. What those restrictions amount to, however, is simply a rejection of essentialism in the contexts at stake. If Spinoza does make use of a coherent conception of lifeform, then, it must be a non-essentialist one.

I have argued that Spinoza's system does indeed have the resources for such a conception of lifeform. On this reading, Spinozistic lifeforms need not be, and are not, grounded in some pre-existing essence; rather, they are grounded in the activities that lifeforms perform, and are subject to. This provides a conception of lifeform that does not violate the restrictions of the system, and that has its criterion of identity inbuilt, through the fact of mutual maximal usefulness, which obtains at each member of a lifeform, rather than having to be located in some (impossible) universal entity or some (inadmissible) common feature. This amounts to a conception that fulfils the action-theoretic requirements of lifeforms, but circumvents the usual essentialist commitments, being intrinsically mutable and multiply realizable through other (e.g. morphological) levels.

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PART II
THE MODEL OF HUMAN NATURE

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4

Human Nature in Spinoza's Philosophy

Julie R. Klein

The desire for a clear idea of human nature in Spinoza's philosophy is easy to understand. As an ethics, the *Ethics* is concerned with human flourishing, which depends on cooperative, mutually beneficial arrangements for living, and which Spinoza ultimately identifies with intellectual knowledge and its characteristic affect, *amor dei intellectualis*. To understand the sophisticated notions of human freedom discussed in the fourth and fifth Parts of the *Ethics*, or the more basic issue of how human beings differ from animals (E4p37s1), we need some idea of what defines, or at least what counts as, human. Our situation as readers is the same in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* and the *Political Treatise*. In TTP 20, Spinoza invokes the difference between human and other natures to articulate his vision of the well-organized *respublica*: "The end of the Republic, I say, is not to change men from rational beings into beasts or automata, but to enable their minds and bodies to perform their functions safely, to enable them to use their reason freely, and not to clash with one another in hatred, anger or deception, or deal inequitably with one another" (TTP 20.12; C 2:346/G 3:241).[1] An appropriately human politics, it seems, cannot model itself on the biblical Adam, "who after he believed the lower animals to be like himself, immediately began to imitate their affects and to lose his freedom" (E4p68s; C 1:585/G 2:262). In the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza emphasizes that he is concerned above else with "human life, one defined not merely by the circulation of the blood, and other things common to all animals, but above all by reason, the true virtue and life of the mind [*sed quae maxime ratione, vera mentis virtute et vita*]" (TP 5.5; C 2:530/G 3:296).[2] Without a workable notion of human nature, Spinoza's recommendations in ethics and politics would seem vain: indefinitely addressed and ambiguously applicable, if applicable at all. In short, if we are to improve our way of life, knowledge of human nature would presumably help us by illuminating our *propria* and perhaps our essence, clarifying the causal

[1] Cf.TP 4.4: "Even though we say that men are not their own masters, but are subject to the Commonwealth, we don't mean that they lose their human nature and take on a different nature. Nor do we mean that the Commonwealth has the right to make men fly, or (what is equally impossible) to make men honor those things which move them to laughter or disgust."

[2] See also E3p57s, E4p37s1, and E4p68s for appeals to the difference between human and animal affects.

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relations that pertain to us, and indicating how we can collaborate with others like us to persevere in existing and secure virtue, power, and freedom.

Yet Spinoza presents no definition, nominal or real, of "human being". He insists that human beings are *partes naturae*, describable through the same laws of nature as all other natural things (E3 Pref). In the *Ethics*, there is no single proposition, nor a single, fully comprehensive scholium that represents Spinoza's view of human nature. E1 App seems to promise an account of human nature, but the promise may reflect an abandoned plan (C 1:444/G 2:81, ll.32–33), and the E4 Preface offers an *exemplar humanae naturae* as a measure we create for our own use, but not a definition per se. Nor can we find definitions of the human being in the TTP, the TP, or Spinoza's Letters. The TTP variously refers to the "natural condition" of human beings (e.g., TTP 17.27, 20.37, etc.), and TP 1.7 refers to the "common nature, or condition" of human beings, yet neither text elaborates systematically, preferring instead to proceed by examples. As much, then, as Spinoza strives to develop demonstrative accounts of affects (E3 Pref) and politics (TP 1.4), it is unclear how to do so without a definition of human nature.[3] In the judgement of Spinoza textualist *par excellence*, Alexandre Matheron, "Spinoza speaks of man, and in a sense he speaks only of him, but what he says never characterises man *as such*".[4] Defining God is integral to the *Ethics*, but defining human beings is apparently not, even if living with them is something we do all the time.

Why is this so? Spinoza's own remarks about "man" offer some clues. In E2p40s1, he dismisses some familiar historical definitions as merely imaginative universals, that is, as paradigmatically inadequate ideas.[5] Universals of this kind reflect any human body's limited capacity to retain sense impressions, which renders them confused. Further, they arise from the idiosyncratic constitution and experience of individual human bodies, which makes for verbal rather than real agreement. A term like "man" thus turns out to be abstract, and, as is the case with all imaginative ideas, easily but improperly reified when we take it at face value. These remarks are of a piece with Spinoza's well-known suspicion of universals and talk of species.[6] If Spinoza cautions us about ideas of rational animals, or for that matter upright or laughing animals, featherless bipeds, and—if we take a broad view of his targets, freely willing Cartesian mind–body composites—does he perhaps offer us some rational alternative, either via processes of emendation that would extract useful elements from inherited ideas or by independently appealing to newly discerned common notions as the foundations of a genuinely rational account?

[3] Interestingly, TP sets out what appears to be a practical standard of demonstration. Spinoza promises "to demonstrate the things which agree best with practice, in a certain and indubitable way, and to deduce them from the condition of human nature", so as to construct a science of the affects "as properties which pertain to" human nature (TP 1.4). In Klein, "Spinozan (Trans)formation", I consider the relationship between "demonstration" and examples in Spinoza's approach to politics.

[4] Matheron, "L'anthropologie spinoziste?" p. 16.

[5] CM 1.1 presents an earlier version of the same argument.

[6] KV 6.7; CM 1.1; E2p48s.

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Per E2p40s2, a properly rational idea would be an adequate idea of the properties of human beings, derived from adequately known common notions, presumably those common notions that pertain to human beings (E2p38c). It would enable us to conceive human beings truly and necessarily (E2p41; E1ax6; E2p44, E1ax4). With this in mind, we might also inquire whether Spinoza, despite his own evident scepticism about imaginative formulations, offers some sort of improved imaginative ideas of human beings, which, while ill-suited to epistemology and theoretical knowledge might be well suited to practical affairs in a given historical place and time. What form(s) do Spinoza's ideas of human nature take; what are they good for?

In pursuing this question, I shall follow a path suggested by Matheron's own answer. Matheron argues that Spinoza cannot offer a single definition of "man" and must instead offer two definitions. Neither is fully satisfactory on its own, and indeed the two must be taken together. One appeals to human anatomy—bodily morphology, really—but does not enable us to demonstrate human rationality. The other appeals to rationality but cannot limit itself to the human. Only the two combined, Matheron argues, serve Spinoza's ethical and political agenda.[7] Seen this way, the question of human nature reveals the heterogeneous demands of theoretical science and practical reason. Where for theoretical pursuits we would look for a single definition of the human, politics resists such a singular starting point. The absence of a single definition or a single, intrinsically determining human essence should not, however, prevent us from looking for a useful notion of the human in Spinoza.[8] Rather than appealing to a definition—or wielding one as a prior criterion of inclusion and exclusion—we can look to the degree to which and manner in which things interact and so reveal themselves as the *res similares* invoked in E3p27. In particular, we can investigate the extent to which *res similares* can come into agreement and so act in common, mutually beneficial ways. Spinoza's assessment that there is nothing more useful to one human being than another human being (E4p18s) is a pointer in this regard, as are his many evocations of the benefits of human society. At the same time, we cannot ignore the differences that explain formidable human enmity.[9] As Spinoza never tires of reminding us, human affects occur in causal networks, and hatred is every bit as natural as love.

[7] Matheron, "L'anthropologie spinoziste?", p. 23.

[8] In this respect, I concur with Matheron, and with Rice in, "*Tanquam Naturae Humanae Exemplar*: Spinoza on Human Nature", who concludes that the absence of "a univocal concept of human nature" in Spinoza's philosophy does not prevent us from formulating serviceable notions (p. 299).

[9] In addition to the extensive analyses of hate in E3, see TP 2.14. The echo of Hobbes is unmistakable: "Insofar as men are tormented by anger, envy, or some affect of hatred, they're pulled in different directions and contrary to one another. For that reason they're more to be feared the more they can do, and the more shrewd and cunning they are than other animals. And because (as we said in I.5) men are by nature subject to these affects most of the time, they are by nature enemies."

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Before turning specifically to the practical character of Spinoza's idea of human nature, I consider some key passages from his major works on the subject. As will become clear in Section 1, my own view of these texts is nominalist rather than idealizing or Platonist in orientation, though I shall hardly be able to offer a full defence of the nominalist approach here.[10] Section 2 reviews some recent discussions of Spinoza's view of human nature. I focus primarily on work by three non-Platonizing, non-idealizing commentators, Karolina Hübner, Moira Gatens, and Michael Rosenthal. These three commentators debate whether Spinoza's idea of human nature, in the form of an idea we can construct from resources he offers us or in the form of the *exemplar humanae naturae* offered in the E4 Pref, should be regarded as imaginative or rational. Whatever else we may say, it is not an intuitive idea of the essence of a singular thing. In Section 3, I link the commentators' debate to the under-theorized question of practical reason in Spinoza, and I connect their reflections to recent work on the power of imagination by Susan James and the nature of reason by Michael LeBuffe. Section 4 is a brief conclusion.

4.1 Platonism and Nominalism

Let us first consider some of Spinoza's appeals to human nature. In the *Ethics*, E4p18s marks a high point in Spinoza's appeals to human nature: "we can think of no external things more excellent than those that agree entirely with our nature [*cum nostra natura prorsus convenient*]". Those perfectly agreeable external things are none other than human beings who live "according to the guidance of reason" (E4p35). Reflecting on the value of human harmony, Spinoza quotes the popular saying that "man is a God to man" (E4p35s). With less glory and decidedly more pathos, E4p50s locates our humanity in the ability to provide mutual aid: "[O]ne who is moved to aid others neither by reason nor by pity is rightly called inhuman. For (by E3p27) he seems to be unlike a man" (E4p50s). Human bodies, Spinoza argues, always require "things outside us" for self-perpetuation (E2post4), and in any case are small powers within a much more powerful nature (E4p3). Our capacity for maximal agreement with other human beings means that we can combine powers with them and advance ourselves through a shared striving to persevere in existing:

[10] For a systematic critique of fairly Platonizing approaches to Spinoza, see Lærke, "Aspects of Spinoza's Theory of Essence. Formal Essence, Non-Existence, and Two Forms of Actuality"; Lærke, "Immanence et extériorité absolue. Sur la théorie de la causalité et l'ontologie de la puissance de Spinoza" is also very helpful. Rice, "*Tanquam Naturae Humanae Exemplar*" surveys and critiques earlier discussions. Diane Steinberg, "Spinoza's Ethical Doctrine and the Unity of Human Nature" presents an alternative path, as does Justin Steinberg, "Imitation, Representation, and Humanity in Spinoza's *Ethics*."

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> if, for example, two individuals of entirely the same nature are joined [*junguntur*] to one another, they compose [*componunt*] an individual twice as powerful as each one. To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man. Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all would so agree [*conveniant*] in all things that the Minds and Bodies of all would compose [*componant*], as it were, one Mind and one Body; that all would strive [*conentur*] together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, would seek [*quaerant*] for themselves the common advantage of all. (E4p18s; C 1:556/G 2:223)

The theme of human mutuality is of course at the heart of the TTP. There, Spinoza echoes Hobbes in reminding us that everything from the "wretched and crude" minimal necessities of life, from the cultivation of food to protection from natural harms and provision of security against depredations by our fellows, to "the arts and sciences that are supremely necessary for the perfection of human nature and its blessedness" depends on mutual assistance (TTP 5.19; C 2:143/G 3:73).[11] TP 2.15 observes that "men can hardly sustain their lives and cultivate their minds without mutual aid" (C 2:513/G 3:281).

E4p36 and its scholium mark another high point. The proposition argues that the greatest good, far from being exclusive or scarce, is available to all human beings: "The greatest good of those who seek virtue is common to all, and can be enjoyed by all equally". The reason is that the greatest good is knowledge of God. As the demonstration explains, "the greatest good of those who seek virtue is to know God, i.e. [. . .] a good that is common to all men, and can be possessed equally by all men *insofar as they are of the same nature* [*omnibus hominibus quatenus ejusdem sunt naturae*]" [C 1:564/G 2:234; emphasis added]. E4p36s reinforces the appeal to human nature by deriving the commonality of this greatest good from "the very essence of man [*ipsa humana essentia*]".[12] Clearly, no one's intellectual knowledge

[11] TTP 16.12 repeats the point. Human vulnerability is a recurrent theme in Spinoza's philosophy. In E4p70s, Spinoza advises the wise generally to eschew "the favors of the ignorant" but cautions that even the ignorant can bring "human aid" in times of need. *Tractatus Politicus* I.6 argues that "some sort of civil order [*statum aliquem civilem formant*]" is inevitable on account of our "common human nature, or condition" (TP 1.6). TP 6.1 observes that "All men fear being alone, because no one alone has the strength to defend himself, and no one alone can provide the things necessary for life." Spinoza's limited acceptance of the Aristotelian and Stoic idea of human beings as social animals in E4p35dem reflects these claims.

[12] Some interpreters find appeals to a human essence in E1p8s2, which contrasts the singularity of substance with the plurality of modes, and in a related discussion in E2p10. I take these passages to bear on the difference between thinking in terms of substance and thinking in terms of modes. Another text that might be taken to provide evidence of the human essence is E1p17s, where Spinoza calls the essence of a human being "an eternal truth" according to which two actually existing human beings "can agree entirely [*prorsus convenire possunt*]". Appealing to this passage faces two difficulties. First, as Lee Rice notes, although "a Platonistic interpretation of this passage would have it mean that there is a single human nature in which all (and only) humans agree (*convenire*)", the text "says only '*convenire possunt*'—not that two human beings do agree, but that they can" ("*Tanquam Naturae Humanae Exemplar*", p. 300). Second, this passage presents Spinoza's opponents' view, not his own.

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of God precludes anyone else's, and, if we look back to E2p47 and its scholium, it is clear that everyone can, in principle, form the third kind of knowledge. In TTP 5.41, Spinoza offers a two-part test for picking out human beings that runs parallel to E4p50s. As in the *Ethics*, the paths to human identity are rational or imaginative. He calls those who are incapable of knowing God either through reason, that is, by demonstrative knowledge, or through revelation, that is, through imaginative means, "inhuman, almost bestial [*paene brutum*]" (G 3:78).

Turning to the political treatises, we find Spinoza appealing to a common human nature in connection with articulating the republican basis of social agreements and in connection with criticizing as absurd the anthropological suppositions of royalist politics. TTP 16.12, for example, which comes immediately after Spinoza's exposition of the *summa lex naturae* that all things strive to persevere in existing (TTP 16.1; cf. E3p6), emphasizes that no one prefers risk to safety:

> There's no one who does not desire to live securely, and as far as possible, without fear [. . .]. There is no one who lives among hostilities, hatreds, anger and deceptions, who does not live anxiously, and who does not strive to avoid these things, as far as he can. (TTP 16.12–13; C 2:284/G 3:191)[13]

TTP 16.14 similarly appeals to another offshoot of the conatus principle, namely, the "universal law of human nature" that no one foregoes a perceived good except when hoping for a greater good and, vice versa, no one accepts an evil except when in fear of a greater one (C 2:285/G 3:191–192). TP 7.27 makes a different appeal to a shared human nature by ridiculing the monarchist pretence that ordinary people are intrinsically unfit to rule: "everyone has the same nature [*natura omnibus eadem est*]. Everyone is proud when he's master; everyone terrorizes when he's not cowed by fear; and everywhere it's common for enemies and servile flatterers to bend the truth—especially when they're ruled despotically by one or a few men, who in their trials consider the size of the parties' wealth, not the right and the true" (C 2:559/G 3:320). Everyone, in other words, exhibits common patterns of response, and those patterns manifest a common nature.

Platonizing readers have found in these texts evidence of a single human essence admitting of different instantiations. On a maximally Platonizing reading, Spinoza would provide both singular essences—each human being would be defined by its own essence—and a higher species essence—all human beings would share a species essence. As an intrinsic nature that defines all human beings, the species essence would explain the agreement and mutual usefulness of human beings. On a Platonizing reading, we might also differentiate between the formal and

[13] Spinoza twice cites Seneca to caution against violent governance (TTP 5.22, TTP 16.29). See also TP 6.1: "All men fear being alone, because no one alone has the strength to defend himself, and no one alone can provide all the things necessary for life."

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actual essences of singular things so as to account for divergences between human nature in principle and human nature as we find it in lived experience. Andrea Sangiacomo, for example, following on Valtteri Viljanen's argument in *Spinoza's Geometry of Power* that Spinoza grounds the power of things in their dynamic essences, has recently put forth a sophisticated version of this strategy, differentiating between "singular essences and the conditions under which these essences come to exist and act".[14] For Sangiacomo, singular essences "are eternally inscribed in God's attributes", but they can exist in different ways according to the extent they can be 'adapted' to their environment, that is, to external causes, which act upon them".[15] Under this modified essentialism, Sangiacomo argues, the idea of human nature is not a singular essence from which effects flow but rather something we grasp by noticing converging aptitudes and causal patterns. What we know as "humanity" is thus an observational upshot of relationality, "just a consequence of how singular things are able to agree and convene with each other".[16] Thus, relationality turns out to be, as it were, the lower level of reality.

Yet the same texts to which Platonizing readers appeal admit of perfectly plausible nominalist interpretations. For the nominalist, each human being has its own essence, in the sense that there are no things without essences and no essences without things (E2def2). What the nominalist, contra the Platonist, denies is precisely any separate realm of essences. For the anti-Platonist reader, both E1p18, which insists on immanence, and E1p25s, which insists that "God must be called the cause of all things in the same sense in which he is called *causa sui*", prove central. As a mode amidst the infinity of modes produced by substance (or God or Nature) under infinitely many attributes, a human being is "something (by 1p15) which is in God, and which can neither be nor be conceived without God, *or* (by 1p25c) an affection, *or* a mode, which expresses God's nature in a certain and determinate way [*certo ac determinato modo*]" (E2p10c). Each thing, in other words, expresses God or Nature's power in its own determinate way. To say this is not to deny that human beings—or any other collection of modes or singular things—exhibit certain commonalities. It is, however, to insist these commonalities do not amount to a shared essence and to emphasize the equally primordial role of difference and variation. In E1app, for example, Spinoza describes human bodies as constituted by a mix of agreements and differences:

> Although human bodies agree in many things, they still differ in very many. And for that reason what seems good to one, seems bad to another; what seems ordered to one, seems confused to another; what seems pleasing to one, seems displeasing to another, and so on [. . .]. [E]veryone has experienced this

[14] Sangiacomo, "What are Human Beings? Essences and Aptitudes in Spinoza's Anthropology", p. 80.
[15] Sangiacomo, "What are Human Beings?", pp. 80–81.
[16] Sangiacomo, "What are Human Beings?", p. 98.

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> [variability] sufficiently for himself. That is why we have such sayings as 'So many heads, so many attitudes,' 'everyone finds his own judgment more than enough,' and 'there are as many differences of brains as of palates'. (C 1:445/G 2:82–83)

The physics that follows E2p13 individuates bodies according to their respective *rationes* of motion and rest. Human bodies, as distinct from other bodies, exhibit a high degree of composition (E2post1) and internal heterogeneity (E2post2). Spinoza categorizes our judgements of value, moreover, as originally and pervasively imaginative, that is, as determined by ideas of the order of affections in the body. The sheer variety of human paths through nature, with all of the encounters those paths involve, produces multiplicity. Thus, even as Spinoza observes that "human bodies agree in many things", even pointing to common notions that are proper to human as distinct from other bodies (E2p38c),[17] human beings are, at the same time, exceedingly diverse. Spinoza's analysis of the imaginative politics of ambition in E3p31s, rests on his appreciation of human difference. If in fact everyone had the same temperament (*ingenium*), the demand for uniformity could succeed. Because human beings differ, the politics of ambition leads to mutual hate.[18] E4p32–34 amplifies this analysis, arguing that passions preclude agreement in nature and eventually generate conflict. TTP 16.12–14 makes the same point, noting that peace depends on living according to the guidance of reason rather than the promptings of imaginative affects.

In the *Ethics*, E3p57 epitomizes Spinoza's view of the singularity of human beings:

> Each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other [*Quilibet uniuscujusque individui ab affectus alterius tantaum discrepant, quantum essential ab essentia alterius differet*]. (C 1:528/G 2:186)

To demonstrate this claim, Spinoza appeals first to the first axiom of the *Ethics* 2 physics, which holds that affections are constituted by the affected and the affecting body together and, consequently, that "one and the same body may be moved differently according to differences in the nature of the bodies moving it" and "conversely, different bodies may be moved by one and the same body" (E2 ax1'; C 1:460/G 2:99). Second, he appeals to the idea that all affects originate in

[17] See discussion in Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*.

[18] TTP 17 develops this theme. Spinoza argues that nature produces a multitude of singular individuals of different temperaments or character, a *varium multitudinis ingenium* (TTP 17.14, G 3:189). Only laws and customs consolidate natural diversity into nationalities: "Nature creates individuals, not nations, individuals who are distinguished into nations only by differences of language, laws and accepted *mores*. The latter two factors, laws and customs, can lead a nation to have its particular mentality [*ingenium*], its particular situation [*conditionem*], and its particular prejudices [*praejudicia*]" (TTP 17.93–94, G 3:217).

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desire, joy, and sadness. Since desire is the "the essence or nature of the individual" (E3p9s), he argues, the desire of one individual differs from that of another "as much as the nature, or essence, of the one differs from the other" (E3p57dem). The scholium that follows puts the proposition to double and radical use. It appears to explain both the difference between irrational animals and human beings as species or groups and to explain differences among the individuals who populate each group. Thus, what Spinoza calls the horse's lust to reproduce (*libido procreandi*) differs from the human form thereof, and the drunkard and the philosopher do not actually share the same *gaudium*:

> though each individual lives content with his own nature, by which he is constituted, and is glad of it [*gaudeat*], nevertheless that life with which each one is content, and that gladness, are nothing but the idea, or soul, of the individual [*idea, seu anima eujusdem individua*]. (C 1:528/G 2:187)

Once we realize that *gaudium* works the same way as *libido procreandi*, we must conclude that it is not immediately clear that the drunkard and the philosopher belong to the same species or kind. Both may differ from the horse, but what do they have in common? In Matheron's terms, the two figures share bodily morphology, but only one exhibits reason. If the theoretical lesson seems to be to look to things rather than words, which often mask difference, the political lesson is to ask to what extent and for what purposes the two figures can act in common.

Matheron's wariness about the sufficiency of single criterion of the human proves its importance here. If E3p57s raises a genuine question about what sorts of others are actually sufficiently like us to collaborate in persevering in existing, we ought to be sceptical about taking rationality—or even proto-rationality—as the mark of the human. Critical as he is of the pleasures of the drunkard, Spinoza nevertheless reminds us that sobriety is not the sole measure of the human. E3p27 suggests that the ability to share affects is crucial, and E4p50s tells us that human beings recognize one another by their desire to offer one another assistance in times of trouble (E4p50s). For some purposes, in other words, even apparently disparate human beings have something important in common, and the relevant test appears to be experiential: "one who is moved to aid others neither by reason nor by pity is rightly called inhuman. For by 3p27 he seems to be unlike a human being" (E4p50s). In another passage that counsels an expansive view of the category "human", even the most rational person, whom Spinoza advises to "avoid the favors of the ignorant" (E4p70dem) should not absolutely shun their assistance, "for though men maybe ignorant, they are still men, who in situations of need can bring human aid" (E4p70s). TTP 16, which emphasizes the range of human beings to whom a state must appeal, makes a similar point in insisting on the natural right of everyone from the sage to the fool, the sane to the mad (TTP 16.5).

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On a nominalist reading, the perfect *convenientia* of E4p18s looks aspirational rather than real. We can think about the great usefulness of perfect agreement, and we can wish that "all would so agree [*conveniant*] in all things that the Minds and Bodies of all would compose [*componant*], as it were [*quasi*], one Mind and one Body" (E4p18s).[19] As the subjunctive construction and the use of *quasi* indicate, this ideal composition is hypothetical. Far from invoking a shared essence, the text tells us what would happen *if* two individuals of exactly the same nature were to exist.[20] Just a few pages later, E4p29 evokes the mixture of commonality and difference we saw in the case of bodily difference in E1 App. In its own way, E4p29 clarifies the nature of partial agreement with carefully limited, qualified formulations about commonality. Spinoza argues that "Any singular thing whose nature is *entirely different* from ours [*a nobis prorsus est diversa*] can neither aid nor restrain our power of acting, and absolutely, no thing can be either good or evil for us, unless it has *something in common with us* [*nisi commune aliquid commune nobiscum habeat*]" [Emphasis added]. Being constituted by *aliquid commune* makes interaction possible, yet to have something in common is not to have everything in common, that is, to exhibit complete identity. Human beings are, in the idiom of E3p27, *res similares*. In other words, if we experience "an external thing whose nature is like our nature [*corporis externi natura similis sit naturae nostri corporis*]" (E3p27dem), we are experiencing another human being. We need not appeal to some intrinsic paradigm or pre-given nature that underwrites accord amidst difference. Rather, we can explain human relationality by common properties, namely, the ones that enable us to communicate and share affects. Similarity or likeness names the space between unbridgeable disparity and complete identity. As Justin Steinberg observes, approaching the question of the human things this way enables Spinoza "to speak of 'human beings' as a loose set of beings who are structurally 'like him'—the relation of likeness admitting of degrees—rather than a set of beings with a shared substantial form or essence".[21]

[19] TP 3.2 uses "*veluti*" to mark a similar gap between the ideal model and the real assembly of singular individuals.

[20] Although the move from human bodies or individuals to social bodies or individuals seems clear enough here, in fact it is the subject of considerable scholarly debate. Matheron *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, pp. 330–354 sets the terms for subsequent discussion. Rice, "Individual and Community in Spinoza's Social Psychology", and Barbone, "What Counts as an Individual for Spinoza?" reject Matheron's position. Moreau, *Spinoza: l'expérience et l'éternité,* pp. 448–456, defends and extends Matheron's position. Matheron, "L'état, selon Spinoza, est-il un individu au sens de Spinoza?" responds to his critics. In two re-publications of the essay (Matheron "L'anthropologie spinoziste?" and "Is the State an Individual in Spinoza's Sense"), Matheron addresses the different but not antithetical transindividuality thesis in Balibar (*Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality*; "*Potentia Multitudinis, Quae Una Veluti Mente Ducitur*: Spinoza on the Body Politic."). Other useful essays on the theme include Montag. "Who's Afraid of the Multitude: Between the Individual and the State", Campos, "The Individuality of the State in Spinoza's Political Philosophy", Sharp, "Spinoza's Commonwealth and the Anthropomorphic Illusion", and LeBuffe, "Citizens and States in Spinoza's *Political Treatise*".

[21] Steinberg, "Imitation, Representation, and Humanity in Spinoza's *Ethics*," p. 400.

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Politics in particular shows us the process of recognizing, solidifying, and building similitude. TTP 3 deflates Jewish theories of national election by God on nominalist grounds and reanalyses collective identity as cultural production: "The only thing that distinguishes one nation from another", he argues, "is the social order and the laws under which they live and by which they are directed" (C 2:114/G 3:47). He repeats the point in TTP 17, in that instance rejecting Christian theological efforts to essentialize the Jews as intrinsically "stiff-necked": "Surely nature creates individuals, not nations, individuals who are distinguished into nations only by differences of languages, law, and *mores*". Only laws and *mores*, not some intrinsic nature, "can lead a nation to its singular mentality, its singular character, and its particular prejudices [*ingenium, singularem conditionem et denique singularia prejudicia*]" (TTP 17.93; G3:217). TP 5.2 similarly holds that "Men aren't born civil; they become civil". Along these same lines, TP 6.3 stresses rulers and subjects alike must be "compelled [*coacti*]" to live as if they are rational and thereby truly virtuous:

> If human nature were so constituted that men desired most what is most useful, there'd be no need of skill to produce harmony and loyalty. But it's evident that human nature isn't at all like that. As a result, it's been necessary to set up a state, so that *everyone*—both those who rule and those who are ruled—does what's for the common well-being [*quod communis salutis interest*], whether they want to or not. That is, it's been necessary to set it up so that everyone is compelled to live according to the prescription of reason, *whether of his own accord, or by force, or by necessity* [emphasis added] (TP 6.3; C 2:532/G 3:297–298).[22]

If the guidance of reason is what unifies human beings, unity must be produced, either by cultivation and encouragement or by force, whether we realize its value to us or follow an authority. From this standpoint, political unity would reflect not the manifestation of an intrinsic principle, but rather the coalescence or convergence of similar things and efforts to stabilize it.

4.2 Some Recent Approaches

Let us consider a few recent approaches to Spinoza's idea of human nature by Karolina Hübner, Moira Gatens, and Michael Rosenthal. These non-Platonizing, non-idealizing readers agree that the idea of human nature originates in our natural activities of collecting or sorting experiences according to agreement and disagreement, similarity and dissimilarity (E2p29s), and comparing things according

[22] Cf. TTP 4 (G 3:59) and TTP 5 (G 3:59).

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to standards of perfection and imperfection, good and evil (E4pref), and usefulness and harm (E4p31c). They disagree, however, on the exact character of what these processes produce. Hübner argues that we can reconstruct an adequate idea of human nature. At the other extreme, Gatens is the most sceptical about our ability to reason on the basis of the common notions (E2p37–39) and to know what our nature is. She therefore regards ideas of human nature as images and fiction, where fictions function as hypotheses or conjectures. In so doing, they occupy some intermediate zone between *mere* imagination and the adequate ideas of reason.[23] Their intermediate character is tested by experience, and Gatens herself urges us to come to grips with a "disturbing" dimension of Spinoza's view, namely, the conventional origins and status of normative claims.[24] Rosenthal's position is intermediate. It echoes Gueroult's provocative if ultimately unsuccessful effort to differentiate *entia imaginationis* from *entia rationis*,[25] emphasizes that our ideas of human nature are not pure fictions—that is, utterly detached from reality—but bear some relation to natural realities insofar as they track perceptible properties of individuals we actually encounter and thereby serve our desire to persevere in existing.

Hübner[26] reconstructs Spinoza's "human nature" or "humanity" as a rational representation. Rational representations, for Hübner, are products of the mind's constructive power and so exist only in the mind. Hübner's preferred name for her approach is "constructivism", which serves to distinguish her view from Platonism on the one hand and strict nominalism on the other.[27] Specifically, she holds that the idea of human nature is derived from common notions discoverable via imagination, and reflects the shift from imagining to reasoning. Because the common notions are adequate ideas (E2p38), ideas derived from them are also adequate (E2p40), as well as true (E2p34). Like Gilles Deleuze and Martial Gueroult before her, Hübner thinks we can employ the subset of common notions that pertain distinctively to human bodies (E2p39c).[28] Hübner's candidate for human nature is "the power to reconstitute one's own mind by adding adequate general ideas to the collection of ideas that for Spinoza is this mind".[29] Whether this proposal picks out only human beings is not entirely clear, but, given Matheron's view, the problems may be Spinoza's, not Hübner's.

On the positive side, Hübner's proposal clearly evokes E4p25, which emphasizes *conatus intelligendi*, and E5p20s, which refers to the human being's *potentia*

[23] This means, for all intents and purposes, that we do not know the essences of complex things, since few people can claim abundant or extensive *scientia intuitiva*.
[24] Gatens, "Spinoza's Disturbing Thesis: Power, Norms and Fiction in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*".
[25] Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 413–425.
[26] Hübner, "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection".
[27] Hübner, "Spinoza on Essences, Universals, and Beings of Reason", p. 59.
[28] Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*. See also Gueroult, *Spinoza II: L'Âme*, p. 334.
[29] Hübner, "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection", p. 131.

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cogitandi et formandi adaequatas ideas. In framing the rational representation of being human in terms of a power of increasing the mind's constitution by adequate ideas, moreover, Hübner's position does justice to E3p9dem, which characterizes the essence of the human mind as constituted by adequate and inadequate ideas. No individual could exist without some activity, no matter how minimal,[30] and so any mind must have at least one true idea (e.g., TIE §33, G 2:14), but no human being is purely active (E4p4); human power is always relative to other powers (E4p5). Fundamentally, then, Hübner's proposal does justice to the developmental, dynamic character of Spinoza's treatment of human cognition. We are "born ignorant of the causes of things" (E1app) and "born ignorant of everything" (TTP 16.7), but we can increase our powers of clarification and inference, thereby becoming more rational and perhaps intuitive. On the negative side, numerous propositions in the second part of the *Ethics* deny that we have adequate knowledge of ourselves. This reflects the fact that no human mind, whatever the extent of its adequate ideas of natural things, is identical with the infinite intellect. Indeed, although nature itself is fully intelligible, it is not fully intelligible to us: "Each of us has—in part, at least, if not absolutely—the power to understand himself and his affects" (E5p4s). Spinoza recalls this qualification in E5p20s, noting that "[i]nsofar as the affects are passions, if clear and distinct knowledge does not absolutely remove them (see E5p3 and p4s), at least it brings it about that they constitute the smallest part of the Mind" (C 1:606/G 2:294). Because we are constantly exposed to disturbing affections and sad affects, we require *remedia*, *dictamina*, *praecepta*, *dogmata*, and images (E4appxxxii, E5p10s, E5p20s). No one is perfectly rational, either in the sense of understanding everything or in the sense of being rational all the time.

Gatens argues in a series of papers that Spinoza's notions of the human are generally imaginative and best classified as fictions, that is, as hypotheses or revisable conjectures.[31] Gatens stresses Spinoza's own presentation of the *exemplar humanae naturae* as something "we set before ourselves" (E4pref; C 1:545/G 2:208) to enable us to render evaluative judgements about how we are living. In this respect, it is an imaginative standard. Spinoza, she emphasizes, invokes *figmenta* (which, like the word "fiction", derives from *fingere*) precisely (a) when we do not have adequate causal knowledge (TIE §53), and (b) whenever we are concerned with ends, which must be of our own making since nature does not supply them (E1app, TTP 16.10; G 3:190–191).[32] Both conditions for fiction obtain in the case of formulating an account of human nature. With respect to knowledge, Gatens doubts our ability to discover the common notions relevant to human beings and so argues that the

[30] See the discussion in Shein, "Not Wholly Finite: The Dual Aspect of Finite Modes in Spinoza".

[31] Gatens, "Spinoza's Disturbing Thesis", "Compelling Fictions: Spinoza and George Eliot on Imagination and Belief", and "Singularity, Similarity, and Exemplarity in Spinoza's Philosophy".

[32] Gatens, "Compelling Fictions", pp. 78–79. Gatens notes that Edwin Curley points to the same passage in the TIE to gloss *figmenta* and fictions as hypotheses (C 1:637).

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commonalities on which we base our hypotheses are imaginative. Crucially, to say that the commonalities are imagined is not to say that they are unreal, but that they can emerge only through natural processes.[33] She also regards Spinoza's ontology as relational and therefore causally complex and over-determined in ways that undermine the prospect of adequate self-knowledge.[34] Hence "the universal model of human nature that Spinoza offers should be understood as provisional (because our knowledge is incomplete), revisable (because our knowledge of Nature grows), and general enough to be operational in a range of cultural and historical contexts (to meet the problem of the contextuality of norms)".[35] The upshot for Gatens is that we should view Spinoza's model of human nature as "a flexible and enabling fiction"[36] derived from each individual's experience-driven recognition that "it shares some common features with other beings; beings with whom it may combine powers".[37] Ultimately, then, for the philosopher, the *exemplar* is a "fictional device, a mode of thought that is put to work in the service of the human endeavour to persevere in existence".[38]

Rosenthal's characterization of human nature as an *ens rationis* belonging to practical reason represents a third option.[39] He points to the late Scholastic notion of analogy by attribution to argue that, although an *ens rationis* "does not refer to a real entity" and is not "an entity with a single meaning", it is nevertheless rational in the sense that "neither does it refer to nothing, that is, to the play of equivocation of pure fiction". As distinct from Hübner's rational representation, Rosenthal's practical *ens rationis* remains inadequate. As distinct from Gatens' emphasis on fictions as imaginative, Rosenthal pushes the notion of human nature closer to reason.

[33] Considering the use of fictions in politics, Gatens and Lloyd remark perceptively that "The fictions which bind together communities are not always deliberately fabricated falsehoods propagated by those who stand to gain by them. Rather, social fictions may be distorted or imaginative but genuine attempts to grasp the complex relations within and between collective bodies, and between the present and past history of those collective bodies" (Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present*, p. 90).

[34] Relationality is essentially the idea that individuals are constituted in causal networks rather than as atomistic or ontologically discrete individuals. Individuals are, for the relational reader, co-constituted by socio-political influences, including the affects of others we acquire by imitation. One recent anthology that explores these issues is Armstrong, Green, and Sangiacomo (eds.), *Spinoza and Relational Autonomy: Being with Others*.

[35] Gatens, "Spinoza's Disturbing Thesis", p. 467; see also Gatens, "Compelling Fictions", p. 78.

[36] Gatens, "Singularity, Similarity, and Exemplarity", p. 201.

[37] Gatens, "Singularity, Similarity, and Exemplarity", p. 204. These "common features" may derive from but will typically not match or even be directly traceable to the common notions of E2p37–38. Spinoza himself claims that prejudice can obscure the common notions that ground reason (E2p40s1). Since prejudice is tenacious and often operates below our notice, seemingly naturalizing its results, it is a formidable obstacle.

[38] Gatens, "Spinoza's Disturbing Thesis", pp. 467–468. Susan James makes a similar point about narratives, noting that philosophical ideals need to be concretized in order to be of use in everyday life. They "ground our grasp of the things that matter to us, of the means to achieve them, and of the forms of cooperation that will help us realise them" (James, "Narrative as the Means to Freedom: Spinoza on the Uses of Imagination," p. 254).

[39] Rosenthal, "Spinoza on Beings of Reason [*Entia Rationis*] and the Analogical Imagination".

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He grapples with a conclusion Gatens accepts, namely, that insofar as our ideas of human nature are derived from imagined patterns rather than common notions, they would "fail in their purpose of defining an objective and certain standard of value", leaving us with "an open question [as] to what extent these exemplars, 'beings' more of the imagination than of 'reason', can lead to an ethical life in Spinoza's sense—that is, to a life governed by reason".[40]

Seen this way, Rosenthal's appeal to Suárez and the late Scholastic framework provides a middle space or bridge across the emergent gap between *entia imaginationis* and *entia rationis*. Theorizing human nature as a practical *ens rationis* means that our idea "bears an analogous relation to what is really real and known by reason" and "bears a pragmatic relation to truth and can be either bolstered or undermined via experience".[41] If in reasoning *sensu pragmatico* we consider ideas of human nature that are better or worse, that is, useful or harmful to us, such that our claims do not meet the test of adequacy and truth, practical reason is nevertheless neither arbitrary nor capricious. The pragmatic rational relation lies between mere imagination, which is idiosyncratic and so arbitrary and capricious, and reason *sensu stricto* or *theoretico*, which is universal and adequate in virtue of its foundations in the common notions. Along these lines, Rosenthal observes that practical reason's debt to imagination is not without risk, but also not without possibility: "[T]here is no guarantee that such efforts will lead us to something resembling true ideas about their object, but there is the possibility that they will".[42] The real test, in any case, is ethical and political: do our practical claims lead to human flourishing, or do they mire us in destructive conflict?

4.3 Commentary

In one sense, given an ontology of singular things, both imaginative and rational ideas of human nature are problematic. Images of "the human" are confused and inadequate derivatives of imagination, but rational ideas of the properties of

[40] Rosenthal, "Why Spinoza Chose the Hebrews: The Exemplary Function of Prophecy in the *Theological-Political Treatise*", p. 216.

[41] Rosenthal, "Spinoza on Beings of Reason", p. 245. Here, it is worth recalling a point from one of Rosenthal's earlier discussions of exemplars. Pointing to the "underlying epistemological ambiguity" of exemplars, Rosenthal emphasizes that "Spinoza warns the reader against imagining that exemplars and the values attendant on them are found in, or products of nature itself. They are just human constructs made in order to compare things, to judge relative value, and to emulate in one's actions. As soon as those who use an exemplar violate its intrinsic epistemological and practical limitations—using it to explain nature itself, rather than simply as a guide to conduct—it tends to lose its ability to serve its original purpose. Moreover, certain people, realizing that the masses are ignorant and easily manipulated, are eager purposely to misuse these exemplars to gain power for themselves" (Rosenthal, "Why Spinoza Chose the Hebrews", p. 224).

[42] Rosenthal, "A Qualified Defence of Rationalism: On the Role of the Analogical Imagination in Spinoza", p. 247.

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human nature miss the singularity of singular things. E2p40s1 attributes the reductive, levelling character of imaginative universals to the limited capacities of human bodies to retain impressions, the variety of human bodies, and to those bodies' paths through nature. No one can retain every impression without admixture, any body's composite character induces varying reactions, and the number of such bodies and their paths through nature is infinite. Imagination amalgamates without distinction, rendering an image that appears to be common and real despite its confused, abstract nature. To reason, in contrast, is to think clearly and distinctly about the properties of things and to conceptualize things "as they really are", that is, as necessary. Reasoning amounts to sorting through "agreements, differences, and oppositions" (E2p29s) to arrive at common notions relevant to collections of things and to following the causal order of nature. The process seems akin to the TTP 7 model of using a (Baconian) history of nature to understand relationships among things and infer definitions.[43] Reason "does not explain the essence of any singular thing" (E2p44c), but through it we instead conceive an indeterminate human being—"any human being"—in terms of their properties—and the singular actually existing thing that strives to persevere in existing, agrees or disagrees in some respects with others, experiences others as friends or enemies, and so on. The essences of singular things are known only in *scientia intuitiva* (E2p40s2, 5p36s).

In another sense, however, the commentators' efforts to work out Spinoza's idea of human nature and to ascertain the epistemic status of the *exemplar humanae naturae* are of great consequence. When we consider the argument, running through *Ethics* 3–4, that the results of a rational, naturalistic analysis of human bodies, minds, and affects are "more useful" for living well than the unrefined dispensations of imagination, everything is at stake. Even if moral arguments and claims about ends have a different status from rational claims derived from clear and distinct ideas and necessary causal inferences, they need not, however, be totally unrelated to them, and indeed Spinoza thinks that rationally informed ethics and politics is superior to the dispensation of imagination alone.[44] Taken together, Gatens and Rosenthal, in particular, point to a form of human thinking intermediate in character and quasi- or informally rational. In this respect, their work jointly raises the question of how we should envision the boundaries of the three kinds of knowing described in E2p40s2 and whether that list should be considered exhaustive for all purposes. Gatens states the brief for imagination, depicting it as a source of hypotheses, that is, provisional ideas. Rosenthal stretches the notion of

[43] See TTP 7.13 ff and the discussion in Savan, "Spinoza: Scientist and Theorist of Scientific Method".

[44] In political terms, the community organized by ambition in the self-image of its founder (E3p29s, p31s), the community organized by theologico-political fear and hope, or any community organized by domination rather than freedom is imaginative in character. The sustainable *respublica* is a rational alternative because it answers to the imperative of self-preservation/advantage, understood primordially as security.

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reason, finding a practical form that proceeds on the basis of inadequate ideas yet generates constructive results.

Their efforts can be brought into productive conversation with recent work by Susan James and Michael LeBuffe, respectively. Working from the side of imagination, James recommends a more capacious view of imagination. Imagination, she argues, is a "wide ranging kind of thinking" that "encompasses the thinking and behaviour that we base on our experience of particular things, situations, and processes".[45] On James's account, imagining includes not only "our perceptions and expectations, memories and fantasies, together with the passions that run through them", but also "the kinds of reasoning we employ to bring these experiences together", such as means–end inference and other informal strategies. Rosenthal's claim that we can reason with imaginative ideas derived through relations of analogy similarly looks like a case of quasi- or informal reasoning. Perceived likeness, rather than adequate known commonality, would be the principle of connection, and practical outcomes would measure our proximity to what reason would recommend. Gatens' hypotheses, too, fit James's description of the informal way imagination organizes and interprets our encounters with things and events.

James's Spinoza allows imagination to "describe, explain, or justify".[46] These explanations are more limited than genuinely rational explanations because they track the response of some knower's body or group of knowers' similar bodies rather than originating in notions common to all human bodies. Imaginative versions of similarity are less reliable and less stable than what meticulous rational study teaches. Nevertheless, James's analysis pushes us to think beyond an entirely suspicious approach to imagination and to consider how imaginative thinking might sometimes arrive at what reason, operating differently, would recommend.[47] Spinoza calls this prospect to our attention in E4p59, which argues that a given action might emerge from imagination or reason: "To every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect". To the extent that an imaginative idea promotes greater activity, that is, leads us to "those things that follow from the necessity of our nature", it "agrees with reason [*cum ratione convenit*]" (E4p59dem).[48] E4p59dem also hints, suggestively, at the possibility of a person being so powerfully affected with joy as to be "led to rational perfection [*ad tantum perfectionem duceretur*]".

From the side of reason, Michael LeBuffe for his part suggests a more flexible approach to Spinoza's model of practical, as distinct from theoretical, reason. LeBuffe

[45] James, "Narrative as the Means to Freedom", p. 253.
[46] James, "Narrative as the Means to Freedom", p. 253.
[47] This contrast explains the difference between the imaginative politics of ambition in E3p31s, which fails because my temperament (*ingenium*) cannot be the basis of agreement for everyone else precisely because they are similar, but not identical, to me, and the politics of reason, which proceeds in terms of the genuinely common (E4p35 etc.).
[48] The agreement would be felt as an increase in joy, the very feeling of activity and increasing power (E3p11).

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argues that what Spinoza calls "the guidance of reason" "frequently does but in some important instances does not clearly derive from Spinoza's account of ideas of reason in *Ethics* 2".[49] To account for cognitive status of this non-rationally derived guidance, LeBuffe departs from the E2p40s2 taxonomy to introduce a second, minimal sense of the rational as the consistently present. He points to maxims or principles that "are easily kept present to the mind because they are continuously confirmed and never contradicted in experience"[50] and to "something that anyone who is outside of immediate influence of a powerful passion will recognise as valuable".[51] Grasping constancy, in LeBuffe's sense, is close to recognizing what is common, but it falls short of clear perception and necessary causal inference. It is, then, a form of pattern recognition useful for living, even if it does not rise to the level of reason in the E2p40s2 sense of involving adequate ideas.[52]

LeBuffe's examples are drawn from the *Ethics* (e.g., the maxims in E4p46 and 5p10s) but the TTP is perhaps more illustrative. Spinoza regards prophecy as an imaginative phenomenon and generally denies the prophets rational knowledge, yet he endorses the core prophetic injunction to love our neighbours and seek justice. Thus, it seems we need not deny that prophets, via some informal inferential process—whether we attribute it to imagination, to practical reason as a form of reasoning that relies on imaginatively derived premises, or see it as the expression of a minimal rationality that grasps useful patterns—sometimes grasp what reason recommends in the form of clear and distinct causal knowledge. Spinoza's analysis of the divergence of Christ's Apostles on the vitally important matter of salvation similarly suggests the role of a quasi-rational process. If the Apostles' respective teachings about salvation via faith or works had been a matter of intellectual knowledge, the Apostles would have agreed, for the order of the intellect is "the same in all men" (E2p18s). Yet clearly the Apostles disagreed, and their disagreement emerges historically as sectarian disputes and war. The Apostle James apparently did not know intellectually that salvation comes through works. Imagining that it does so nevertheless provides ethically salutary and, for Spinoza, politically essential, motivation. Nor did Paul know intellectually that salvation comes *sola fides*, much as thinking that it does generates instructions for living and has numerous practical consequences. Thinking of the Apostles as sophisticated practitioners of imagination, or, in Rosenthal's sense, as to some degree practically rational, seems more helpful than envisioning them as philosophical teachers.[53]

We can extend Rosenthal's appeal to the Aristotelian tradition by looking beyond Suárezian *entia rationis* to the close connection of thought, desire, and sensation in Aristotle's account of practical reason (*phronesis*). In *Nicomachean Ethics*

[49] LeBuffe, *Spinoza on Reason,* p. 121.
[50] LeBuffe, *Spinoza on Reason,* p. 130.
[51] LeBuffe, *Spinoza on Reason,* p. 131.
[52] LeBuffe, *Spinoza on Reason*, pp. 147–149 notably resists imputing a model of induction to Spinoza.
[53] For a different take on the Apostles, see Lærke, *Spinoza and the Freedom of Philosophizing.*

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VI, Aristotle notes that "thought as such", by which he means theoretical cognition, cannot "move anything". In other words, the conceptual, universal cognition (*dianoia*) characteristic of Aristotelian science, which is concerned with affirmation and denial and truth and falsity, does not per se result in action. Action depends, properly speaking, on desire, which is shaped primarily by habituation: we pursue and avoid things in accordance with ethical virtues inculcated in our environment. Aristotle characterizes practical as thought for the sake of an end, and he calls the living human being in the world of action a "desiring intellect or a thinking desire" (VI.2 1139b30–36). Because, as Aristotle puts it, "action is concerned with particulars", practical reason (*phronesis* or Latin *prudentia*) is closely linked with sensation, which affords us access to particular things. In the ideal scenario, the *phronimos* joins universal knowledge with what experience teaches. As an example, Aristotle considers decisions about what to eat. Knowing, he observes, that the science of nutrition has demonstrated that light meat is healthful does not help me if I cannot grasp that the chicken in front of me is actually light meat (VI.8 1141b15–24). *Phronesis* is, he explains, concerned with our ability to deliberate and decide how to comport ourselves with respect to "the ultimate particular, which is an object not of science [*episteme*] but of sensation" (VI.9 1141a25–30).

Spinoza, too, denies that conceptual knowing—in his philosophy, the second kind of knowing as presented in E2p40s2 and related texts—can by itself explain our actions. Per the *Ethics*, reason conceives things necessarily and universally, giving us a general causal account of nature. We can, accordingly, demonstrate necessary truths about the properties of human minds, bodies, and affects (E2p40s2), but these truths, which are founded in the common notions, "do not explain the essence of any singular thing" (C 1:481/G 2:126) and do not locate us in time (E2p44c2). Intuition conceives things as singular, but it does so without regard to time and place (E5p29s). In contrast, sensation makes our own bodies evident to us (E2a4), and imagination makes external bodies present, registering their place, time, and other specificities (E2p17–18s, 2p44s, 5p29s).[54] As Spinoza argues in E2p26, "the human Mind does not perceive any external body as actually existing, except through ideas of the affections of its own Body", that is, via images (E2p26c, C 1:469–470/G 2:112; cf. 2p17s). Accordingly, our inadequate knowledge of the

[54] See Renz, *The Explainability of Experience. Realism and Subjectivity in Spinoza's Theory of the Human Mind* for a discussion of the place of sensation in Spinoza's philosophy and its relation to his rationalism. Renz ultimately situates Spinoza as a proto-Kantian for insisting on sensation as a counterpart to conceptual analysis. To my mind, Spinoza's presentation of imagination and sensation locates him in a Judaeo-Islamic Aristotelian tradition. Like Renz, I agree that Averroes stands behind some of the discussions in *Ethics* 2, but I think the question of whether to contextualize Spinoza with respect to Averroes' *Long Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*, with its doctrine of a single potential intellect, or with respect to Averroes' *Epitome* and *Middle Commentary on De Anima* needs more study. In Klein, "'Something of It Remains': Spinoza and Gersonides on Intellectual Eternity", I showed parallels with the Middle Commentary via Gersonides and discounted the influence of the Long Commentary. More recently, I have come to wonder whether Spinoza knew more about the Long Commentary via Elijah Delmedigo and hope to explore that in a future essay.

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duration of our bodies is matched by inadequate knowledge of the duration of external things (E2p30–31). Indeed, the only way we cognize actual existing external bodies concretely is inadequately. Hence, they appear to us as "contingent and corruptible" (E2p31c). E4p62s gathers these texts to emphasize the imaginative character of our ordinary decisions:

> we can have only a quite inadequate knowledge of the duration of things (by 2p31), and we determine their times of existing only by the imagination (by 2p44s) . . . That is why the true knowledge we have of good and evil is only abstract, or universal, and *the judgment we make concerning the order of things and the connection of causes, so that we may be able to determine what in the present is good or evil for us, is imaginary, rather than real.* (E4p62s; C 1:582/G 2:257) [Emphasis added]

The scholium also reaches beyond Spinoza's claims about time and duration to highlight a further imaginative feature of judgement, namely, our ascriptions of value and, thereby, our construction of ends.[55] In short, whatever universal ideas we may form, concretizing them, namely, judging in the present tense in relation to what is good or evil for us, is imaginative. In TTP 4, Spinoza's discussion of laws made by human decision (*ab placito humano*)—sovereign or instituted law, as distinct from the universal laws of nature—makes the same point. We should, he holds, "define and explain things [sc. Sovereign laws] through their proximate causes" because "universal consideration concerning fate and the connection of causes cannot help us to form and order our thoughts concerning particular things" (TTP 4.4, G 3:58). In making laws, we are guided by ends we desire towards specific actions (TTP 4.1 G 3:57). The process of legislating requires that we consider things as possible rather than necessary, that is, that we imagine them (TTP 4.4, G 3:58; cf. E1p33s1).

These texts, admittedly, complicate the idea of living *ex ductu rationis*—or, to put the issue the other way round, show that living *ex ductu rationis* is not so straightforward as it might appear. At a minimum, reason conceived in theoretical terms teaches us how imagination and desire work, enabling us to take account of their role in practical life. Reason thus exhibits its own power and its limits. If we follow the paradigm of E2p40 and its scholia, Spinoza might seem to bar us from envisioning some combination of imaginative and rational thinking. He seems, for example, strongly concerned that accepting imaginative ideas as rational leads to error; confused starting points generate and perpetuate error. Yet it seems excessively strict to think that theoretical knowledge would have no impact on our decisions and behaviour. On the Aristotelian model, practical reason and

[55] Spinoza calls ends *figmenta* at (E1 App C 1:442/G 2:80). I discuss the interpretation of this term in a forthcoming essay, "Spinoza as a Theorist of Repressive Empowerment".

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the realm of action are precisely the meeting point of knowledge, desire, and sensation. Spinoza, too, holds that actually existing human minds are constituted by a ratio of adequate and inadequate ideas (E3p9), and he denies that anyone achieves complete or perfect rationality (E4p68s, 5p4s, 5p10s, 5p20s). Letter 56, written to Hugo Boxel, seems also to entertain the prospect or fantasy of some fully rational approach to life, only to withdraw it. After a painstaking discussion of possibility and necessity, Spinoza comments on the place of imperfect knowledge in the life of action:

> It's true that in this world we act on the basis of conjecture [OP: *multa ex conjectura facere*]/are feeling our way [NS: *by de tast gaan*]. But it's false that we act on the basis of conjectures in our speculations. In daily life, we must follow what is most probable, but in speculations we are required to follow the truth [*In communi vita versimillimum, in Speculationibu vero veritatem cogimur sequi*]. Man would die of hunger and thirst if he weren't willing to eat or drink until he had a perfect demonstration that the food and drink would be good for him. But in speculation [*Contemplatione*] this is irrelevant. On the contrary, we must beware of assuming as true something which is only probable [*solummodo verisimile*]. For once we have granted something false, infinite other false things follow from it. (C 2:422/G 4:260)

This letter is a bit reminiscent of Spinoza's treatment of Buridan's ass in E2p48s. Human beings, like donkeys—and other parts of nature—strive to persevere in existing. Hence, they do not—indeed they cannot—await perfect rationality.

4.4 Conclusion

The experience of being human, however difficult it is to define human beings, in Spinoza's philosophy is indisputable. Spinoza's concern with human beings stands outside religious and other anthropocentric models incompatible with his generally naturalistic outlook. In pursuing the question of the human in Spinoza, I have argued in this chapter that the sign of the human is to be found as degrees of the capacity to imitate one another (E3p27), to act in common to persevere in existing (E4p18s), and, in a measure that integrates these two criteria, in the ability to offer one another assistance, whether for imaginative or rational reasons (E4p50s). These measures are, in my judgement, compatible with a nominalist reading of human essences as singular and diverse. Indeed, they spare us the metaphysical complications of a Platonizing view.

I have argued, moreover, that exploring Spinoza's ways of discussing human beings underscores the need for more attention to the issue of Spinoza's account of practical reason. Rosenthal's reflections on practical reason, James' emphasis on

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the informal, quasi-rational powers of imagination, and LeBuffe's articulation of a secondary or less scientific notion of reason all suggest ways of thinking of practical rationality in Spinoza. While it is true that Spinoza himself seems not to have worked out a clear theory of practical rationality, his resistance to dualisms of all kinds suggests the need to explore the differences between reason as formulated in E2p40s2 and more practical forms of reason that seem more closely connected to imaginative life with both due caution and genuine curiosity for what becoming more rational might mean for ordinary affairs.[56]

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[56] I wish to express my gratitude to the Maimonides Center for Advanced Jewish Studies, Universität Hamburg, Jewish Scepticism Research Grant (DFG-FOR 2311), where some of the work on this essay was done. I also wish to express my thanks to the editors of this volume for their comments and feedback.

5

"*Homo homini Deus, & Homo homini Lupus*": Spinoza on Human Nature and Human Relations

Steven Nadler

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In the dedicatory epistle to his Latin treatise *De Cive* (1642), addressed to William, Earl of Devonshire, Thomas Hobbes paraphrases and combines a pair of ancient Latin proverbs into a single aphorism: *Homo homini Deus, & Homo homini Lupus*. The original saying, "*Lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom qualis sit non novit*" ("Man is a wolf, not a man, to one whom he does not know") appears in Plautus' play *Asinaria* (The Ass Dealer).[1] Seneca, on the other hand, in his *Epistulae morales ad Lucilium* took the more sanguine view: "*Homo sacra res homini*" ("Man is a sacred thing to a man").[2] Hobbes notes that "both sayings are true". It all depends on the context. He says, "the first is true [Man is a God to man] if we compare citizens amongst themselves; and the second, if we compare cities." Between citizens, there is justice and charity, but between cities there is enmity: "the two daughters of war: deceit and violence, that is, in plain terms, a mere brutal rapacity".[3]

Spinoza, of course, was well acquainted with both the ancient classics and Hobbes's political writings. In fact, there is good reason to think that he was well acquainted with these specific texts: he owned a copy of the 1652 Latin edition of Plautus' comedies; a 1654 Dutch translation of Seneca's complete letters to Lucilius (translated by Spinoza's friend Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker); and a volume of the 1647 Latin edition of Hobbes' *Elementa philosophica*, which is almost certainly *De Cive* with the dedicatory letter.[4]

It is interesting, then, that Spinoza saw fit to make use only of Seneca's adage, ignoring the darker one that appears in Plautus and Hobbes. In Part Four of the *Ethics*, Spinoza explains how human beings are of great benefit to each other, at least to the extent they "agree in nature". Thus, it is in the interest of each and every

[1] Act IV, scene 4, line 89.

[2] Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Ep. XCV.34.

[3] Hobbes, *De Cive*, "Epistola Dedicatoria"; the English translation is alleged to be by Hobbes himself, in Thomas Hobbes, *Man and Citizen*, pp. 89–90.

[4] See my annotated translation of the inventory of Spinoza's library in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 3.

Steven Nadler, *"Homo homini Deus, & Homo homini Lupus": Spinoza on Human Nature and Human Relations*
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person to do what they can to bring him or herself and others to a condition of freedom and rational virtue, and thereby ensure that they all, as much as possible, agree in nature. Proposition 35 of Part Four states that "Only insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, must they always agree in nature [*natura semper necessario conveniunt*]", and the first corollary of this proposition says that "there is no singular thing in nature that is more useful to man than a man who lives according to the guidance of reason". Spinoza's version of the ancient adage appears in the accompanying scholium: "What we have just shown is also confirmed by daily experience, which provides so much and such clear evidence that this saying is in almost everyone's mouth: man is a God to man [*hominem homini Deum esse*]" (C 1:563/G 2:232–233).

In this chapter, I argue that Spinoza should not have been so quick to drop the gloomier vision of things. On Spinoza's own terms, a human being may be not only a God to other human beings, but a wolf as well. This is true, I suggest, not only because of the ways in which human beings differ from each other, through their irrational passions, but—admittedly, despite what Spinoza explicitly says—in part because of their common human nature as well. An important (and, I suggest, Spinozistic) reason why human beings come into conflict when living under the guidance of the passions—but, to be clear, not when living under the guidance of reason—is because they are all human beings.

5.1 Human Nature

Let me begin with an explanation as to what I take Spinoza to mean by 'human nature'. The topic has been well discussed in the literature, so this will be brief.[5] What human nature most certainly is *not* is a metaphysically real item like a Platonic form or Aristotelian essence. Universals for Spinoza are merely mental concepts that human beings form for the sake of categorizing things on the basis of observed similarities. These similarities are typically picked out in a highly subjective way on the basis of inadequate ideas derived from experience, the imagination, or prejudice. But sometimes they are identified in a more systematic and objective manner through adequate ideas formed by the intellect from what Spinoza calls "common notions"—essentially, innate ideas that present features broadly shared throughout nature (for example, "extension").[6] Unlike what Spinoza calls the "actual essences" of individuals, which consist in the particular parcel of *conatus* or power of striving that constitutes each and every existing individual in nature, universals or general essences are not ontically real features in

[5] See, for example, Karolina Hübner, "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection", and Ursula Renz, "Spinoza on the Good Life for Humans".

[6] See E2p38c.

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the world. Independent of our ideas, nature is not carved up into kinds or species by essences (E4pref, C 1:544/G 2:206).

At the same time, as Karolina Hübner has nicely shown, Spinoza allows (as anyone must) that there are indeed undeniable similarities among things in nature.[7] There are real structural isomorphisms and functional resemblances between individuals that can objectively serve to delineate certain groups or kinds. Some things are more like certain other things than they are like many other things, and it is just these real similarities that we ordinarily focus on to form the universal ideas that categorize items. Often, Spinoza notes, "the mind can imagine neither slight differences of the singular [things] (such as the colour and size of each one) nor their determinate number, and imagines distinctly only what they all agree in" (E2p40s1; C 1:477/G 2:121). These similarities so picked out by a species- or kind-concept can thus constitute "the nature" of that kind of thing.

This is as true of human beings as it is of giraffes, trees, and houses. Spinoza's recognition of something called "human nature" appears early in the *Ethics* (E1p8s2, C 1:413/G 2:49), and informs much of what he goes on to say on metaphysical, epistemological, moral, and political questions. What constitutes human nature is a matter of body and mind. The human body, like any body, is a parcel of extension. It is a collection of parts of matter that is structured in a certain way—allowing for some variety among instantiations of that structure within certain broad parameters. In Spinoza's terms, the identity of any particular human body, like the identity of any body, is grounded in a relatively stable *ratio* (proportion or dynamic relationship) of motion and rest among smaller bodies; and human bodies generally exhibit the same basic ratio—one that is both determinate enough to distinguish the human body from other kinds of bodies, but determinable enough to allow for differences among human bodies. In a passage that can be read as referring to the identity of a particular individual or to its being of a certain kind, Spinoza says:

> [T]he individual so composed retains its nature [*natura*], whether it, as a whole, moves or is at rest, or whether it moves in this or that direction, so long as each part retains its motion, and communicates it, as before, to the others. (E2lem7; C 1:461/G 2:101)

What makes a particular, relatively stable collection of material parts a *human* body is simply the nature and complexity of its structure and internal relations. The human body, Spinoza notes, "is more capable than others of doing many things at once, or being acted on in many ways at once" (E2p13s; C 1:458/G 2:97).

Because the essence of the human mind is to be the idea of the human body, the "ratio of motion and rest" in the body and the complexity of its structure

[7] Hübner, "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection".

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and internal relations is expressed or reflected in the organization of ideas in the human mind. What distinguishes the *human* mind from the minds of all other kinds of individuals is just the intentional contents of its constituent ideas (which are primarily ideas *of* parts of the human body) and the ways that those ideas relate to each other.

In other words, what human nature consists in for Spinoza is simply a body whose parts are proportionally and dynamically structured in a certain complex and flexible way and a mind whose ideas are causally and logically ordered, and orderable (whether by "random experience" or by the intellect), in a correspondingly complex way—which is to say, human nature involves a body that is especially active in and responsive to its environment, and a mind that, by virtue of being the idea of that more active and responsive body, is capable of a more intricate and productive kind of reasoning and a higher form of consciousness than other minds. "[I]n proportion as a body is more capable than others of doing many things at once, [. . .] so its mind is more capable than others of perceiving many things at once" (E2p13s; C 1:458/G 2:97). While there is much more that can be, and has been, said about Spinoza's general account of human nature, this brief summary suffices for my purposes here.[8]

Now all human beings, qua human beings, will resemble and be like each other in the relevant ways and exhibit those basic bodily and mental characteristics. Even human individuals suffering from severe physical deformity or mental disability will share the core physical structure of the human body and (except in truly extreme cases) have a sufficiently complex and representationally specific mental life to distinguish him/herself from other lifeforms, including other intelligent lifeforms. To be sure, in Spinoza's system there are limits beyond which an individual of a certain nature might be so transformed that it ends up failing to meet some basic resemblance to other things of that nature and so be of another nature entirely. The nature of a thing can be preserved through changes to a degree, but an individual can conceivably undergo such extreme changes that it is no longer of the same nature.

> I understand the [human] body to die when its parts are so disposed that they acquire a different proportion of motion and rest to one another. For I dare not deny that [. . .] the human body can nevertheless be changed into another nature entirely different from its own. For no reason compels me to maintain that the body does not die unless it is changed into a corpse. (E4p39s; C 1:569/G 2:240)

[8] For two different ways of understanding Spinoza's account of consciousness, see Don Garrett, "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination", and Steven Nadler, "Spinoza and Consciousness".

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However, nothing Spinoza says suggests that human nature cannot take a great variety of forms within the parameters of this broad and fundamental physical and mental resemblance.

Still, he claims, some human beings are more alike than others. This is especially the case when it comes to the mind. "[T]he very essence of man", Spinoza insists, "is defined by reason [. . .] because man could neither be nor be conceived if he did not have the power to enjoy this greatest good", that is, the knowledge of God (E4p36s; C 1:564/G 2:235). But some human beings have developed the power of reason more than others. They have achieved a greater store of adequate ideas, and thus a greater degree of rationality, freedom, and activity. They come closer, that is, to the *exemplar humanae naturae*, or model of human nature, that represents our highest state of power and perfection. And this brings us to the advantages and, I will argue, disadvantages of other human beings.

5.2 "Man is a God to Man"

So, to begin with, how is it that "man is a God to man"? Spinoza's answer to this question occurs in the context of his account of *pietas*—which I will render as "active benevolence", to contrast it with benevolence arising from a passion, such as pity—and the way in which a free and rationally virtuous person will act so as to improve the lives of others and help them to lead lives of freedom and rational virtue.

Spinoza begins his discussion of *pietas* with a proposition that is closely related to his metaphysics of the individual and to the *conatus* or striving that characterizes any thing in nature. He says that "insofar as a thing agrees with our nature, it is necessarily good", where 'good' means "aids an individual in its striving for perseverance" (E4p31 and pref, C 1:545/G 2:208).

A thing that agrees with my nature is good for me because such a thing will necessarily aid the preservation of that nature. A thing that shares my nature must, like anything, strive to preserve its own nature; and insofar as its own nature is my own nature, it is therefore necessarily striving to preserve *my* nature. This seems to be what is going on in the demonstration of this proposition:

> Insofar as a thing agrees with our nature, it cannot be evil. So it must be good or indifferent. If the latter is posited, viz. that it is neither good nor evil, then nothing will follow from its nature that aids the preservation of our nature, i.e. (by hypothesis), that aids the preservation of the nature of the thing itself. But this is absurd. Hence, insofar as it agrees with our nature, it must be good, q.e.d. (E4p31dem; C 1:560-61/G 2:229–230)

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On the other hand, to the extent that a thing is of a nature different from or contrary to my own, it is either indifferent for me (neither good nor bad) or evil (since, as contrary to my nature and to what agrees with my nature, it necessarily works against the preservation of that nature). A corollary to E4p31 adds that "the more a thing agrees with our nature, the more useful or better it is for us". Spinoza's point is essentially that things that agree in nature are good for each other and necessarily contribute to each other's flourishing.

The claim that my own interests are best served when there are others who are very much like me is certainly meant to apply to similarity in nature in general; that is, other human beings are more useful to me than giraffes or trees. This is why it is always better for a human being—even the ideal human being who has reached the peak condition of freedom and rationality—to live with others in society rather than alone. "A man who is guided by reason is freer in a state, where he lives according to a common decision, than in solitude, where he obeys only himself" (E4p73; C 1:587/G 2:264). But it is also meant to apply *within* the category of human nature: those human beings who are *more* like me are more useful to me than human beings who are less like me.

Aside from a vague claim about how a thing sharing my nature is useful to me because it acts to preserve that nature, how exactly is my own welfare promoted by being surrounded by other people who are very much like me? Or, to put it in ethical terms—and assuming that I am a person of rational virtue—how is my own welfare promoted by my helping other people improve themselves and move towards lives of virtue and reason? Why do I, as a virtuous person living according to reason, benefit by striving to increase the powers (and thereby improve the lives) of others? Why should I work on their behalf not just to modify their behaviour but to make them more like me?

One answer to these questions seems to be a rather straightforward quantitative one: basically, two heads are better than one, especially if they are in agreement about such important matters as what is good and what is bad.

> For if, for example, two individuals of entirely the same nature [unite with] one another, they compose an individual twice as powerful as each one. To man, then, there is nothing more useful than man. Man, I say, can wish for nothing more helpful to the preservation of his being than that all should so agree in all things that the minds and bodies of all would compose, as it were, one mind and one body; that all should strive together, as far as they can, to preserve their being; and that all, together, should seek for themselves the common advantage of all. (E4p18s; C 1:556/G 2:223; translation modified)

Although much is left unsaid by Spinoza in this passage, he seems to be arguing that two human beings represent a strengthening (by doubling) of one and the same power—just as two people pushing something provide more power than one

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person. This is suggested by his claim that "our power of acting [. . .] can be determined, and hence aided or restrained, by the power of another singular thing which has something in common with us" (E4p29dem; C 1:560/G 2:229). Two things of the same nature, thus, two things striving on behalf of the same goal—namely, the preservation of that nature—will increase the power working on behalf of that goal and thus the likelihood of its successful achievement. Through my effort to improve the lives of others, then, I am creating accomplices who will contribute to the realization of my goal (which, because of our shared nature, also happens to be their goal).[9]

Spinoza's point here is that human beings are really good for and useful to each other—Gods to one another (where a "God" is understood, by definition or by tradition, to be a benevolent agent)—primarily to the extent that they agree with one another in a rather deep way, as a matter of character, and thus share a common project and a common vision of things. In other words, virtuous human beings who live according to reason "agree in nature" (E4p35). And they agree in nature not only because of their resemblance as human beings—that is, as they participate in "human nature"—but in a more particular sense: their minds agree, their ideas are ordered in similar ways, and thus they reason in like-minded ways. Individuals who live according to reason value the same things and pursue the same goods. The supreme good that virtuous rational people value and pursue is not a finite, transient commodity in a zero-sum competition. Rather, it is something that is eternal, imperishable, and capable of being shared equally by all. "The greatest good of those who seek virtue is common to all, and can be enjoyed by all equally" (E4p36). The good in question is knowledge.

We can now fill in some detail in Spinoza's argument. To the extent that I, a rationally virtuous agent, can successfully help some other person to be virtuous and guided by reason, that person will do only what is truly good for his nature—that is, for human nature. But this nature is exactly what he has in common with me and all other human beings. Thus, what this other, newly rational person now strives for is what is good not only for himself but for all human beings, including myself. "[I]nsofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they must do only those things that are good for human nature, and hence, for each man, i.e., those things that agree with the nature of each man" (E4p35dem; C 1:563/G 2:233). Above all, a person guided by reason pursues the true good that is good for everyone—knowledge and understanding—and thus acts in such a way that he aids the human striving for perseverance. This is why Spinoza concludes that "there is no singular thing in nature that is more useful to man than a man who lives according to the guidance of reason", and that "men will be most useful to one

[9] For an illuminating analysis of this argument, see Alexandre Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, pp. 261–263.

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another when each one most seeks his own advantage [according to the guidance of reason]" (E4p35c1 and c2).

It is thus in *my* best interest to make others more rational; and to the extent that I am rationally virtuous, I know this and will act accordingly. More generally, any rationally virtuous person will know that she is better off surrounded by other rationally virtuous individuals, all of whom are striving for the same thing: the maximization of the true human good and thus the perfection of their common nature. She will therefore undertake, through her actions, to help others reach this condition of rational virtue. That is, she will treat other human beings with active benevolence, nobility, justice, and charity. And she will do so even towards—perhaps especially towards—those who are most under the sway of harmful passions. "He who lives according to the guidance of reason strives, as far as he can, to repay the other's Hate, Anger, and Disdain toward him, with Love, or Nobility" (E4p46; C 1:572/G 2:245).

This appears to be the upshot of Spinoza's main argument for the rational virtue of active benevolence towards others and working to improve their lives by making them rationally virtuous as well and thus increasing the degree to which we are truly, and in a more than superficial way, like each other in nature. But the utility to me, as a free and rationally virtuous person, of another rationally virtuous person goes beyond the very general fact that the things he pursues are what are good for human nature generally, hence good for everyone, hence good for me. There are in Spinoza's account additional connections between the virtue and flourishing of others and my own well-being such that I should, for my own sake, act well towards them and promote an improvement in their lives.

Not only will a person guided by reason be useful to me in my own rational striving for perseverance and improvement because he will be free of such divisive and harmful passions as jealously, envy, and hate—just those affects that would make him oppose me in my endeavours—and because he is promoting what is good for human beings generally, but he will also be of *positive* and *direct* assistance to me in my individual striving. This is because to the extent that he is rational, he will clearly and distinctly see that the more rational and self-determining *I* become, the more free I will be of the divisive passions that would make me interfere with his pursuit of the good life, and, even more importantly, the more I will see that it is in my own best interest to improve *his* life. That is, to the extent I improve his life, he will be someone who clearly and distinctly sees that the more he helps me improve my life, the more useful I will be to *him*. It is in my best interest to make him into the kind of person who will know that helping me increase my power of acting is in his own best interest. So, there is a sense in which I aim to aid him in leading a better life for the sake of the very particular, personal, and positive aid he will actively provide me in return.

Spinoza also believes that surrounding myself with rational and virtuous individuals will do much to positively reinforce my own desire to live according to

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reason and thus my own pursuit of perfection, and that as a rational person I recognize this reinforcement to be a good and desirable thing. In his analysis of the affects, Spinoza notes that "[i]f we imagine that someone loves, desires, or hates something we ourselves love, desire or hate, we shall thereby love, desire or hate it with greater constancy" (E3p31; C 1:512/G 2:164). Seeing someone else love virtue and desire knowledge will make me love and desire virtue and knowledge all the more. Thus, it is useful to me and in my interest, as I strive to reach a more perfect and free condition, to have others love virtue and desire knowledge.[10]

> The good which man wants for himself and loves, he will love more constantly if he sees that others love it. So, he will strive to have the others love the same thing. And because this good is common to all, and all can enjoy it, he will therefore (by the same reason) strive that all may enjoy it. (E4p37dem2; C 1:565/G 2:235–236)

Finally, seeing an improvement in a being similar to oneself—that is, seeing another human being experience the true joy (or increase in the power of acting) that comes through virtue—causes one to feel a sympathetic joy and undergo a similar increase in one's power. "If we imagine a thing like us, toward which we have had no affect, to be affected with some affect, we are thereby affected with a like affect" (E3p27; C 1:508/G 2:160). Thus, again, it is to my own good that there are other free and virtuous people.[11]

What all this amounts to is that a person guided by reason, who sees what is truly in his own best interest, will strive to bring other people to the same level of rational perfection as himself. The virtuous and rational person—the free person—will be actively engaged and take steps to ensure that other people are also guided by reason and pursuing the true good, knowledge. For this is what will maximize their utility to him as he strives for his own perfection. "The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men" (E4p37; C 1:564–565/G 2:235). In other words, a rational and virtuous person will act so that other people also become rational and virtuous. He will behave towards them in such ways as will help *them* achieve the life of reason. But because it is also in *their* best interest to be rational and virtuous, all this is just to say that the person guided by reason will strive to further the interests of others, to act in ways that truly benefit them, albeit from what are fundamentally selfish, not altruistic, motives.

[10] For a thorough analysis of this argument, see Michael Della Rocca, "Egoism and the Imitation of the Affects in Spinoza".

[11] Notice that while these two final arguments do involve passive affects strengthening one's own pursuit of virtue, neither implies that in the rational person the *motive* for benevolence (encouraging virtue in others) arises from the imagination or a passive affect. Rather, what happens is that the rational person sees via reason that surrounding himself with other rational virtuous persons will reinforce his own pursuit of virtue.

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"Man", then, "is a God to man" in two senses. First, reason guides human beings to bring other human beings to a better condition of being, to benefit them in ways that improve their lives. The more one lives according to reason, the more one acts in an authentically benevolent way, for the true (and not merely apparent) good of others, and to make them more like oneself. Second, to the extent that we actually come to share the same nature—not just human nature, but the nature of the rationally virtuous free person—we constitute a mutually supportive society; we are, in short, true friends devoted to maintaining each other's perfection. The more we are guided by reason, the more we act in God-like providential[12] ways towards each other, by pursuing what is good for each and every one of us.

5.3 "Man Is a Wolf to Man"

Let me suggest, though, that this is not the end of the story, or at least it ought not to be the end of the story. For Spinoza should also recognize, as Hobbes did, that "man is a wolf to man". He should acknowledge, moreover, that this is true not only in the context of inter-state relations between groups of citizens, as Hobbes claimed, but also among the fellow citizens and neighbours of a single society.

Now in one sense, this seems like a rather trivial claim and one that Spinoza clearly accepts, since there is the obvious empirical or descriptive fact that human beings so often struggle against each other, sometimes quite violently. The reason for this, according to Spinoza, is the passions, that is, the passive affects and inadequate ideas brought about in us by external things and circumstances. These are what divide us and foment conflict. But I want to argue on Spinozistic terms that human conflict also comes about, in part, because of human nature, through what we have in common. On the face of it, this seems to go against what Spinoza explicitly says. After all, he insists that "[n]o thing can be [bad] through what it has in common with our nature; but insofar as it is [bad] for us, it is contrary to us" (E4p30; C 1:560/G 2:229; translation modified). Likewise, "[i]nsofar as a thing agrees with our nature, it is necessarily good" (E4p31). I am not taking issue with this, at least not directly. My claim is not that other human beings are "wolves", a threat to my well-being, simply because they are of a similar nature to me. This would be to run headlong against what Spinoza says. However, I do want to suggest that, even on good Spinozistic grounds, similarity of nature *contributes to* human conflict by constituting one of its necessary conditions. In other words, while allowing that things with which we have nothing or very little in common can certainly harm us and bring about a diminishing, even

[12] Bear in mind that Spinoza's *Deus sive Natura* does not, cannot, act in a providential or benevolent manner. Thus, when Spinoza says, "man is a God to man", he does not intend the term 'God' to be taken in the metaphysically true (Spinozistic) sense but in the traditional religious (superstitious) sense.

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extinction, of our power to persevere, we can only come into real divisive conflict with other individuals that, at least to some degree, share our basic (human) nature.

First the easy part. Spinoza is clear that it is our differences and particularities, not our commonalities, that divide us and set us against each other. Nothing contributes more to our mutual differences—not to mention differences and changes within the same person over time—than the passions. Our most profound dissimilarities and disagreements regard the ways in which we perceive and feel about things. "Insofar as men are subject to passions, they cannot be said to agree in nature. [. . .] Men can disagree in nature insofar as they are torn by affects which are passions; and to that extent also one and the same man is changeable and inconstant" (E4p32 and E4p33; C 1:561/G 2:230–231). Our bodily differences and differences in the objects with which we happen to come into contact give rise to divergent ways of perceiving the world and affectively responding to it, including the evaluations we make about what is good and bad. "[E]ach one, from his own affect, judges, or evaluates, what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse, and finally, what is best and what is worst" (E3p39s; C 1:516/G 2:170). These different subjective evaluations, in turn, are the expression of differences in desires. "[I]t is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it" (E3p9s; C 1:500/G 2:148).

It is just these passionate affects and desires that give rise to human discord, along with a basic fact about the things that, through the inadequate ideas of sense experience and the imagination, we ordinarily desire; in other words, not everyone can equally share in their possession. Passionate desires tend to be directed at finite, mutable goods that, very often, only one or a few people can obtain. Thus, the subjects of these desires frequently come into conflict.

> A man—Peter, say—can be a cause of Paul's being saddened, because he has something like a thing Paul hates, or because Peter alone possesses something which Paul also loves, or on account of other causes [. . .]. And so it will happen, as a result, that Paul hates Peter. Hence, it will easily happen that Peter hates Paul in return, and so (by IIIp39) that they strive to harm one another; i.e., that they are contrary to one another. But an affect of sadness is always a passion. Therefore, men, insofar as they are torn by affects which are passions, can be contrary to one another. (E4p34dem; C 1:562/G 2:231–232)

Lives in thrall to the passions are necessarily lives of conflict. And individuals subject to the passions will strive agonistically *against* each other, not cooperatively *with* each other. "Insofar as men are torn by affects that are passions, they can be contrary to one another" (E4p34).

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However, I think that if we dig a little deeper, we will find that beneath the conflict generated by the passions—the human passions—necessarily lies that commonality of human nature. Indeed, without that shared nature, there would be no conflict. I do not get into divisive encounters with trees. And while I can certainly have a vicious run-in with a tiger—the tiger's *conatus* may be aggressively opposed to my own conatus—I am unlikely to have what might properly be called a "difference of opinion" or "conflict" with a tiger, mainly because we do not tend either to occupy the same habitat or value the same things. Tigers can certainly harm me, and so in that sense tigers are "wolves" to human beings. But tigers and human beings rarely desire or pursue the same "goods" and so are not likely to encounter each other and come into hostile struggle for possession of those goods. By contrast, it is just because human beings share a basic human nature and, for that reason, occupy the same social space that the same things are good for them and thus the objects of their desires—and this is true whether those desires are guided by adequate or inadequate ideas. Desires guided by adequate ideas will not, of course, generate discord, for the most part; as we have seen, these ideas direct us both to true goods that can be shared and to aiding others in the pursuit of those goods. But, as just noted, desires generated by inadequate ideas will generate discord, and they will do so especially between individuals of the same nature.

Let us consider this in terms of those passions that are the most common cause of human division and conflict and to which Spinoza gives the most attention: hate and its various manifestations, which include envy, jealousy, anger, disdain, vengeance, and indignation.

Spinoza devotes quite a number of propositions in Part Three of the *Ethics* to the passion of hate, which he defines as "sadness [that is, a decrease in power] with the accompanying idea of an external cause" (E3p13s; C 1:502/G 2:151). We hate not only the things that cause us sadness, but also things that resemble things that cause us sadness. We will hate things that affect something we love with sadness and we will hate things that affect something we hate with joy.

Now I can certainly have fear of the tiger. And I suppose we should be capable of hate towards any individual of any kind that threatens to harm us or someone we love. For the sake of argument, then, I will concede that one can hate the tiger—perhaps for mauling me or someone I care about. But it does not seem possible to have those unfriendly and divisive passions that are particular expressions of hate—envy, jealousy, anger, and indignation—towards any individual other than another human being. To speak of envying some non-human individual, or regarding it with jealousy or indignation, or desiring to seek vengeance upon it, just does not seem appropriate.

Consider vengeance, for example. Spinoza defines it as "a desire by which, from reciprocal hate, we are roused to do evil to one who, *from a like affect*, has injured us" (E3daXXXVII; C 1:539/G 2:201; my italics). If vengeance requires "a like affect" between two individuals, then it would seem that it can arise only between

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individuals who are, at some basic level, alike. I certainly do not attribute to the tiger in its vicious behaviour any state of mind that resembles my own, least of all hate.

Or take jealousy and envy. These are always directed at another individual of the same general nature or sort with respect to some object of common desire. Envy and jealousy should arise between myself and another individual only through our clashing desires to possess things that we each regard as good but that only one of us can obtain. And it seems that, for the most part, only individuals of the same basic nature might desire the same thing and come into conflict because of that desire.[13] This is because only individuals of the same basic nature would regard the same thing as good and desirable. Among us human beings, it is because of our common human nature that we have similar needs and wants. Some of these are determined by the adequate ideas of reason and can be satisfied without loss or detriment to another human being; no conflict would arise in such cases. But some of these very human desires are determined by our passions and inadequate ideas, and lie at the foundation of jealousy and envy, and consequently competition.[14]

My reading certainly goes well beyond anything Spinoza actually says. But is it inconsistent with his account of human nature? More particularly, is it inconsistent with what we have seen to be Spinoza's important claim that "insofar as a thing agrees with our nature, it is necessarily good" (*Ethics* IVp31)? No more so than the idea, which Spinoza clearly endorses, that human beings, which share and agree in the same basic human nature, can be at odds with each other when led by the passions. After all, "agreement in nature" is a matter of degrees. As the corollary to IVp31 notes, "the more a thing agrees with our nature, the more useful or better it is for us". One human being (*S*) can agree in nature with me *only* insofar as we are both human beings. (This accounts for my referring throughout this chapter to agreement in "*basic* human nature".) But another human being (*S'*) can agree in nature with me to a higher degree: when we agree not just in our basic nature as human beings, but insofar as we are both free and virtuous human beings living according to the guidance of reason. In this latter case, we (*S'* and I) will not and cannot be at odds with one another. Thus, IVp31 need only be saying that insofar as a thing agrees *entirely* with one's nature—for example, two human beings guided by reason—it is necessarily good. In fact, this is just how Spinoza puts it at

[13] Of course, the tiger might desire (to consume) my body and I might desire (to preserve) my body, but there is really no meaningful sense in which the tiger and I share a particular desire for the same thing.

[14] On commonality of nature as a necessary condition for envy, for example, Spinoza says (E3p55c2) that "no one envies another's virtue unless he is an equal", where by 'equal' he clarifies that he means another individual "who is supposed to be of the same nature as he" and thus not "someone unlike himself". Otherwise, he would be desiring to have something that does not follow from his own nature—something that is "peculiar to another's nature and alien to his own"—which cannot happen. In the scholium to this corollary he notes that we would not envy the qualities of another person whom we regard to be singular or "peculiar [*ei singulariter*]" in his possession of those qualities "any more than we envy trees their height or lions their strength" (C 1:526/G 2:183–184).

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IVp18s: "There are many things outside us which are useful to us, and on that account to be sought. Of these, we can think of none more excellent than those that agree entirely with our nature." He then proceeds to show that when you have "two individuals of entirely the same nature", then "to man there is nothing more useful than man". Two free and rationally virtuous human beings agree entirely in nature and thus are necessarily good for one another.

By contrast, another human being who is under the sway of the passions is *not* necessarily good for me. And if my argument in this chapter is correct, such a human being may be worse for me and bear greater potential to do me harm, just because of our shared basic human nature, than, say, something with which I have no agreement whatsoever in nature (for example, a tree or a tiger).

5.4 Conclusion

Jean-Paul Sartre famously said, "Hell is other people."[15] Spinoza need not go this far. Indeed, I take seriously his account of the ways in which human beings guided by reason are truly and necessarily useful and beneficial, in an essential way, to other human beings. Moreover, it is also the case that the *more* one human being is like another and the more they agree in nature by having minds that resemble each other in the adequacy and order of their ideas, the more useful and beneficial they will be to each other, not least because those factors that, above and beyond what is common in human beings, make for differences—the passions—are diminished. Nonetheless, I do think that Spinoza fails to take account of how what *all* human beings do have in common—their shared basic nature as human beings—is, at least in part, causally responsible for their potential "wolf"-like behaviour to each other. A human being may, under certain conditions of rationality, be a God to a human being. But even on Spinoza's own terms, it must also be said that only a human being, by virtue of being human, can truly be a wolf to human beings.[16]

[15] "L'enfer, c'est les autres" (*Huis Clos*).

[16] I am grateful to the participants in the workshop "Spinoza and the Human Lifeform" (University of Graz) for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay. Special thanks to Ursula Renz and Daniel Garber for their follow-up remarks.

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PART III

KNOWLEDGE AND THE HUMAN LIFEFORM

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6
Living as a Human Being and Self-Interpretation

Lia Levy

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Zoo dat al't geen dat wy van de mensch willen, dat zal moeten van het geslagt des zelfs zyn, het welk niet anders is, als een wezen van reeden (KV 2.4; G 1:60)

Introduction

Human life is a major concern of Spinoza's philosophy[1,2] Spinoza addresses the topic in all its facets, ranging from its metaphysics to the moral and political concerns that drive people in their everyday lives. However, when, as a reader of Spinoza's major work, the *Ethics*, one tries to comprehend what makes certain creatures human and, thus, to make sense of Spinoza's use of the word 'human', one is faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, the ideas of human beings and of human existence are of enormous significance for the philosophical project underlying the doctrine of the *Ethics*. Therefore, the term 'human' carries much philosophical weight in Spinoza's philosophy. On the other hand, Spinoza's view on the nature of general concepts prevents him from being a realist with respect to universals, including the concept of humanity. This suggests that there is no *fundamentum in re* for qualifying certain entities or ways of being as 'human'.

Given the project Spinoza pursues, or at least seems to pursue, in the *Ethics*, neither horn of this dilemma can be rejected without loss. If one rejects the first, one undermines the notion of Spinoza's philosophy having moral or political significance. If one rejects the second, one challenges a key doctrine of both Spinoza's

[1] I read the quotation in the epigraph slightly differently from Curley, following Mignini and Sangiacomo: "So all that we here want [to say about] man will have to be said of his own genus, which is nothing but a being of reason."

[2] I would like to express my gratitude to the editors, proofreaders, Michael Della Rocca, and Rogério Severo for their valuable insights, helpful criticism, and revision of the final version of this chapter. Furthermore, I am indebted to Gerson Luiz Louzado, with whom I have had the pleasure of working on Descartes and Spinoza for the past six years. His generosity has been invaluable.

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deflationary ontology and his epistemology. The question arises: is there a way to avoid this dilemma without denying either the importance of the idea of human life and its specificity or the deflationary character of Spinoza's metaphysical outlook?

It is the central point of this chapter that there is a way to avoid this dilemma, which may only be seen, however, if one reads Spinoza's views on human beings and human life along the lines of an interpretationist account. On an interpretationist account, it is characteristic of both human beings and human life that people—far from simply being human—interpret their lives in terms of the model of human nature, that is, an ideal representation of a human being, while also striving to live according to this ideal. The affective emulation of the ideal of human nature is the formal cause of the intention of action and therefore becomes its efficient cause. In a nutshell, I would say that 'human being' does not denote an essence or a species, but rather a practice (of self-interpretation). Engaging in this practice means organizing one's ideas according to the ideal of human nature, driven by the desire to emulate this example.

In what follows, this reading will be defended in four steps. In the first section, I argue that 'human being' as a class label fails to signify any real essence, indicating that it is more accurately described as conveying a being of reason. This section also critically examines two alternative readings that are at odds with this view.[3] In the next section, I assess the cognitive and affective rationales that explain Spinoza's interpretation of descriptive statements as if they were normative prescriptions for individuals existing in duration, focusing on the role of emulation and the imagination of a perfect and ideal individual. The third section discusses further the claim that 'human being' refers to a purely regulative rational being, signifying the model of human nature. In the final section, I propose a solution to the initial dilemma by synthesizing earlier insights with my interpretation of subjectivity in Spinoza's *Ethics*. This reading understands the *conatus* of the human mind as a continuous reorganization of the ideas and experiences we have, constituting a dynamic flow of self-interpretation.

[3] Since 2009, Ursula Renz has been advancing an entirely new interpretation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, one that frames it from a human-centred perspective defined by self-reflection. Her reading of his concepts of human being and human life is anchored in hermeneutic existentialism, a methodological position that sets her reading apart from conventional readings. Embracing these insights, Renz concludes that Spinoza holds that our personal identities and our lives are shaped by our cultural and historical contexts. I wonder, however, whether her view can accommodate some of Spinoza's claims that singular essences are the formal causes of one's identity, a point that Renz's methodology should contest. Still, Renz offers genuinely valuable insights into Spinoza's thought that could be incorporated into similar analyses. However, her view is both so detailed and broad that it requires a more thorough engagement than can be provided here.

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6.1 Human Being as an *ens rationis*

Returning to the dilemma at hand, Spinoza's writings make incontrovertible the significance of the concept of the human being for his ethical and political philosophy. Consequently, rejecting the first horn of the dilemma just sketched seems unwarranted. However, the dismissal of the second horn demands an explanation since some scholars advocate for its acceptance as a resolution to the dilemma by adopting a realist view of the concept.[4] Others insist on maintaining the impasse, arguing that Spinoza's philosophy is marked by conceptual ambiguity on this matter.[5] I shall contend that it is neither feasible nor required to align Spinoza's ontological and epistemological views with the claim that universal terms denote adequate and true knowledge of essential properties of things in order to account for his theories regarding human beings and their form of life.[6]

In defending this point of view, I claim that it has its basis in Spinoza's doctrine that equates the causal powers of things with their essences. He advocates that '*essentia*' and '*potentia*' refer to the same reality, although they signify different aspects of it. This stems from the argumentative development of substance, which culminates in its definition as *causa sui* (E1def1; E1p1-E1p8) and the alignment of God's essence with divine power (E1p34). The essences of singular things, as determined expressions of God's essence (E1p25c) and therefore of his power, are necessary and sufficient conditions for them to continue to exist as they are (E2def2, E3p7). It follows that, understood in this way, the concept of the essence of a singular thing must designate a singular essence because it operates as its own principle of singularization (E2def2[7]) and, as such, cannot be universal. It also follows that any concept of an essence must be consistent with the variability inherent in Spinoza's concept of power, as some scholars have already correctly pointed out.[8]

This analysis ultimately dismisses the views of human beings as embodying a universal essence. This dismissal is grounded in the incompatibility of such notions with essentialist frameworks that underpin definitional and taxonomic systems of knowledge. In these frameworks, essences function as a formal cause, containing

[4] Hübner's constructionist interpretation ("Spinoza on Essences, Universals, and Beings of Reason") and Istvan's recent thesis ("Spinoza and the Problem of Universals"), both persuasively support this reading. However, due to space limitations, we have to restrict our discussion to Hübner's view.

[5] Della Rocca, "Egoism and the Imitation of Affects in Spinoza", p. 132.

[6] I am therefore in line with anti-realistic interpretations on this issue in Spinoza, such as that of Rice ("Le Nominalisme de Spinoza"), Rosenthal ("Spinoza on Beings of Reason [*Entia Rationis*] and the Analogical Imagination"), Perler ("Spinozas Theorie der Universalien"), and Busse (*Le problème de l'essence de l'homme chez Spinoza*).

[7] For a comprehensive analysis of this definition, see Busse, *Le problème de l'essence*, pp. 27–38. The subsequent definitions of 'particular thing' and 'individual' in the text further support this claim, which, notably, has elicited minimal controversy.

[8] Matheron ("Individu et communauté chez Spinoza"), Viljanen (*Spinoza's Geometry of Power*), Busse (*Le problème de l'essence*), Sangiacomo ("What are Human Beings? Essences and Aptitudes in Spinoza's Anthropology), Hübner ("Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection"), among others.

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the unity of necessary (but not sufficient) properties without which things cease to be what they are. They do not play a role in the efficient causality that produces their existence, nor the changes they undergo. Accordingly, Spinoza's exposition in E2p40s1 portrays humanity as the imaginative idea of an aggregate of fuzzy physical traces in our brain. As a universal concept intended to delineate a natural species through the combination of a *genus* and *differentia specifica*,[9] it fails to impart any true, much less essential, understanding of the things to which it is ascribed.

6.1.1 Addressing Karolina Hübner's Interpretation

The doctrine of equivalence between *essentia* and *potentia* further challenges other attempts to ground the universal term "human being" *in re*. While it may be posited that "human being" aligns with common notions, as indicated in E2p37–39,[10] it should not be presumed to connote an adequate and true knowledge of the singular essence of the thing to which it may refer. Besides, common notions are not scalar concepts applicable to varying degrees.

Karolina Hübner has been developing a nuanced constructivist interpretation of Spinoza's concept of the universal. She claims that the imaginative origin outlined in E2p40s1 does not hold for all universal concepts. Instead, she suggests that a subset of these should be recognized as rational representations (i.e., formed by reason) that encapsulate "mind-dependent (…) general species-essences, endowed with objective reality alone".[11] Such rational representations would emerge from an adequate (and thus true) perception of the similarities truly present in formally existing individuals. Spinoza would conceptualize them as beings of reason, a category he expounds in the inaugural chapter of *Cogitata Metaphysica*. This line of argument allows Hübner to maintain that Spinoza's perspective on universals incorporates elements of realism.

Beings of reason, though, cannot be classified as true or false because they are not *ideas* of things that exist outside our intellect (CM 1.1; G 1:235). I understand this to mean that they may not be considered as representations of the essences of external objects. As modes of thinking, they have their own essences which are mind-dependent. If these rational universals are considered to be beings of reason,

[9] In E2P40s1, Spinoza states that "Those notions they call Universal, like Man, Horse, Dog, etc., have arisen (…) because so many images (e.g., of men) are formed at one time in the human Body that they surpass the power of imagining" (C 1:477/G 2:121). But in CM 1.1 (G 1:234), Spinoza refers to *genus* and *species* as mental tools for assisting memory through classification. While many scholars view these two characterizations as complementary, I propose to consider them as independent, drawing on Gartenberg's compelling arguments in "Spinoza on Relations", pp. 180–187.

[10] Sangiacomo ("What are Human Beings?"), for example, follows this path. His reading will be examined in the next section.

[11] Hübner, "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection", p. 128. See also, by the same author, "Spinoza on Essences, Universals, and Beings of Reason" and "Spinoza on Universals".

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then they can only represent their own intrinsic essences. Furthermore, I do not think they could represent any property of a thing either, because, as Spinoza explains, they are instruments that assist (only) finite intellects.

Moreover, the use of the term "essence" involves a twofold equivocation. First, it is not used with the same meaning in the concepts of *singular essence* and *mind-dependent, general species-essences.* In the former case, the term 'essence' has neither a classificatory meaning nor a classificatory use; rather essence accounts for the singularization of particular things. The mode of thinking by which we know a singular essence is an idea with epistemic value (it can be considered true or false), which refers to a real being. In the latter case, the concept of essence is employed in a diametrically opposed way: it serves to classify rather than to singularize is not represented by an idea and has only a transitory objective reality. Moreover, Hübner's argument entails a second equivocation when she explicitly states that there should be some property "without which a 'human being', understood rationally and adequately, cannot exist, and which conversely cannot exist without a 'human being'": "the power to reason".[12] In doing so, she tacitly introduces an alternative connotation of "essence" that signifies a *common power* inherent in several individuals, albeit in different degrees. This claim may be seen as an attempt to address the variability that one should be able to attribute to essences as powers, according to Spinoza. But this variability cannot be explained, as Hübner suggests, by his concept of *general mind-dependent species-essences* that have only a transitory objective reality. For if that were the case, one would have to conclude that the power of reason is also general and dependent on the mind, whose reality is objective and transitory. So, the gradual realization that she attributes to the power of reason in different "human beings" cannot account for the variability that results from the convergence between *essentia* and *potentia* and which underpins the concept of *conatus*. Which leads to the second equivocation.

6.1.2 Addressing Andrea Sangiacomo's Interpretation

Sangiacomo[13] offers a fresh perspective on Spinoza's essentialism by introducing a two-tiered structure. He distinguishes the singular essences of individual beings from intensive general essences, both of which denote the same concept. These general essences arise from the underlying conditions enabling the existence and action of singular entities, that is, their *conatus*. In particular, Sangiacomo claims that "human essence" refers to the gradual, dynamic, rational agreement *obtained by* individuals existing in duration. Such agreement requires mutual adaptation,

[12] Hübner, "Spinoza on Being Human and Human Perfection", p. 131.
[13] Sangiacomo, "What are Human Beings?".

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which is in turn based on the ability of the individuals to adapt rationally, albeit to varying degrees, to their environment.

The author emphasizes the role of the reciprocal interaction of society and ecology in shaping human existence *qua* human. Individuals construct their humanity, in contrast to an organicist conception that explains the progressive construction of mutual agreements in terms of the naturally social essence of human beings. As Sangiacomo says, the general human essence is "the consequence and not the condition of singular essences",[14] for it emerges from the constant practice of mutual interaction, guided by reason, in the formation of increasingly general agreements. This view aims to be consistent with Spinoza's dynamic metaphysics, as explained by Viljanen,[15] with whom Sangiacomo engages in a debate, offering a distinctive concept of general essence. According to him, humanity serves as both the formal and efficient cause of communities of individuals who are then designated as human beings, without it being a general essence existing as an entity separate from the things it constitutes.

How should we judge this approach? While Sangiacomo's interpretation provides a compelling realist basis for psychological, ethical, and political claims about human beings, and while it is consistent with Spinoza's principle of equating essence with power, and privileging singular essences, it shares with Hübner's approach a potential equivocation in its use of "essence".

As Sangiacomo explicitly puts it, the term "human essence" in its general sense does not mean "a property that specific individuals independently instantiate, but rather […] the way in which different individuals can be considered as parts of a certain whole",[16] resulting from the mutual interaction of enduring singular essences.[17] This seems to imply that the general intensive essence of humanity is instantiated by communities as wholes, and not by their parts. The universal term "human", in other words, is to be attributed collectively to the entire group, rather than distributively to individuals who mutually and diversely agree in accordance with reason. In this case, we might think that this intensive essence is not really general in the sense of species-essence but singular—it denotes the essence of a collective rational individual like a political institution.

On the other hand, when explaining the factors that enable the generation of such rational agreement, Sangiacomo points to "an ontological disposition that makes it possible for different individuals to agree in nature because their essences are structurally similar" and to "a specific aptitude that these different individuals have to agree among themselves in certain conditions".[18] But if that is the case,

[14] Sangiacomo, "What are Human Beings?", p. 81.
[15] Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*.
[16] Sangiacomo, "What are Human Beings?", p. 87.
[17] Accordingly, he states "[w]hen two human individuals agree in nature, such a nature is what we call 'human nature.'" ("What are Human Beings?", p. 88).
[18] Sangiacomo, "What are Human Beings?", p. 89.

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then the efficient and formal cause of the agreement is not humanity taken as a whole, but some expressions of the individual *conatuses* of each part: an ontological disposition and a specific aptitude. The universal term "humanity" must therefore be predicated distributively of the whole, and not collectively as the author claims.

If my reading is correct, then Sangiacomo relies on two different meanings of "general essence": one explicitly defined and the other implicitly suggested by his arguments. The production of what he calls a "general intensive essence" cannot occur unless the *conatuses* of the individuals in agreement are "identically directed"[19] and equally disposed. This implies that the causes of humanity must be conceived as properties shared by some individuals and represented in common notions. But these common properties function as a specific general essence that formally contains the conditions under which individuals can rationally agree with each other and therefore be considered human, insofar as they are part of a whole, humanity. Sangiacomo's hypothesis therefore tacitly inverts the relationship between the whole and the part originally proposed by making the whole a function of its parts, implicitly presupposing a second meaning for the expression "general essence".

In this section, I have argued that Spinoza's view of common notions, universals, and beings of reason, when conceived as classificatory frameworks for particular things, falls short of providing an adequate and true knowledge of singular essences. At best, such classificatory conceptions may provide an adequate grasp of the properties these things really share, as Sangiacomo claims, or of the features in respect of which they really resemble each other, as Hübner argues. However, on both interpretations, they fail to impart a true understanding of the real singular essences of particular things.

I suggest that these objections to realist interpretations of Spinoza's universal terms as essential and taxonomic concepts might very well be extendable to similar scholarly endeavours, thereby reinforcing an anti-realist perspective in Spinoza's philosophy. In addressing the implications of this claim for the understanding of human life, I argue for an account that refrains from grounding human nature *in re* and instead conceives of it as a *being of reason*. The contention here is that Spinoza understands the modes of thought that yield valuations, including both general and moral appraisals, as useful tools for our limited intellects that have no inherent epistemological significance. The next section specifies, in this framework, the conditions for regarding human nature as a normative standard for self-assessment and the appraisals of others, which will underpin the elaboration of this argument in the third section.

[19] Sangiacomo, "What are Human Beings?", p. 89.

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6.2 Human Being as a Standard of Perfection

Spinoza's recognition of the usefulness of evaluative and prescriptive ethical standards (E1App; G 2:81–82) raises a question concerning the coherence of such standards with the deterministic and necessitarian framework of his philosophy. Furthermore, it poses the challenge of reconciling the normativity of these standards with his rejection of the will as a self-determining faculty guided by the principles of reason. A comprehensive examination of such challenges is beyond the scope of this chapter,[20] so I will instead assume a narrower claim, well evidenced by Spinoza's account of Adam's sin in TTP 4:

> That's how it happened that Adam perceived that revelation, not as an eternal and necessary truth, but as a law (…), not from the necessity and nature of the action performed, but solely from the pleasure and absolute command of some Prince. So that revelation was a law, and God, as it were, a lawgiver or Prince, only in relation to Adam, and because of a defect in his knowledge. (C: 132G 3:63)

This narrative illustrates that normativity presupposes a partial understanding of causal descriptive statements, which leads to an interpretation of them laden with a prescriptive value that they intrinsically do not have. This normative dimension which is strictly psychological, is associated with the imaginary presence of a supreme legislative authority capable of rewarding and sanctioning.

Embedded within this view of how we come to interpret descriptive sentences as if they were prescriptive, there are several underlying assumptions. The psychological mechanism excludes the claim of the influence of rational dictates on a faculty of self-determination (free will) or the commandments of a real universal legislator, and is instead driven by affections and desires. Therefore, the requirements for representations to be taken as standards of evaluation are imaginative, thus inadequate and involving the participation of a special type of desire: emulation.

Such a representation should not portray resemblances or common properties. Rather, only a representation of an individual can move our desire to emulate her. For Spinoza, emulation is a way of imitating another's affects (E3p27s). Yet, emulations have different causes and are linked to different kinds of representations: to emulate is only to imitate what we consider "honorable, useful, or pleasant" (E3daXXXIIIex; C 1:539/G 2:200). Thus, we should examine this cognitive condition through a dual lens: the formal reality of the representation that causes the desire to emulate, and the imaginative interpretation of this representation, which is needed for the formation of normative judgements and the structure

[20] See Renz, "Y a-t-il une forme de vie humaine chez Spinoza?", for a reading of Spinoza's theory of modality that avoids this conundrum.

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of psychological assessments. I will primarily address the latter, although I will refer to the former where pertinent.

In the *Ethics*, emulation is first defined as a form of imitative desire, distinct in that it arises specifically from the imagination of the desires in others like us (E3P27s). Emulation is thus demarcated from other affective imitations; it replicates desire itself, rather than the specific desires of joy or sadness. Reflecting upon E3p27 and its demonstration, two inferences emerge. The first, unequivocally, establishes that emulation necessitates imagining an individual, rather than imagining abstract classes or common notions. The second, which merits closer scrutiny, suggests that emulation is grounded in actual, not merely perceived, likenesses. This would imply that emulation is caused by real likenesses between the formal realities of individuals, functioning as an automatic mechanism of imitation, independent of mental processes such as comparison. If this is the case, it poses a serious challenge to my hypothesis, as this would suggest that Spinoza's framework for normativity hinges on the acknowledgement of real similarities among individuals, as posited by scholars such as Hübner and Rosenthal.

Spinoza, however, in anticipation of his discussion of affective imitation, emphasizes the role of imagined similarity in affective imitation by noting that "we do not pity only a thing we have loved (as we have shown in P21), but also *one toward which we have previously had no affect*, *provided that we judge it to be like us* (as I shall show below)" (E3p22s; C 1:507/G 2:157; emphasis added). The explication that follows the second mention of emulation, in E3da, endorses the significance of perceived similarity, providing additional insights. Spinoza explains in E3daXXXIIIex that an imitation of affects can only be considered emulation if an individual imaginatively attributes the qualities of honour, usefulness, or pleasantness to another. It is the personification of such qualities that may inspire our emulation. While the absence of ontological stipulations does not robustly counter the aforementioned reading of E3p27, it does accentuate the ancillary role of imaginative resemblance in affective imitation, especially in its normative and evaluative functions.

The role of the imagination in evaluating and guiding our behaviours and beliefs can best be appreciated by briefly considering the representational conditions at stake. Our normative decision-making involves the articulation of some of our thoughts, despite their possible inherent epistemological limitations. It involves picturing an exemplary individual of the utmost honesty, usefulness, or pleasure, whom we take to be like us and also different from us. Emulation requires a delicate balance: between striving to emulate the virtues of the example without the intention of becoming or possessing her, while remaining aware that the emulator and the emulated are—and always will be—two different individuals. This balance is an essential aspect of the quest to become increasingly like the example. Additionally, for someone to be considered the most excellent example of those virtues that we can imaginatively aspire to and hope for, she must be represented

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as a partially uncontextualized ideal that may serve as a reference across different situations.

The hope of success, in turn, requires that the individual envision herself adopting the behaviour of her ideal in the future, and that she enjoy this projection by viewing it as a self-improvement. Besides, an ideal becomes a guide for one's behaviour and judgements only when sustained efforts are made to align oneself increasingly with it. The hope that fuels this transformative process originates from the belief in the possibility of changing without ceasing to be who one is.

These points clarify the requirements that a representation must fulfil in order to serve as a standard for self-evaluation and the appraisal of others. Building on this understanding, I shall now argue for the contention that "human being" signifies a being of reason, whose role is exclusively regulatory, as is revealed by regarding it as referring to the model of human nature.

6.3 Human Being as Defined by the Model of Human Nature

In the initial section of this chapter, I challenged two refined realist readings of Spinoza's view on human beings, and also maintained that we cannot dismiss this term as a misguided illusion, given its consistent application across the *Ethics* and his other texts.

Moreover, Spinoza does not define what a human being is or what he means by the term. Therefore, at this point, there seem to be no textual reasons to accept or reject the hypothesis that "human being" is one of the terms he uses to designate the same concept that he calls "the model of human nature" in E4pref and "the idea of a perfect man" in KV.[21] But there is at least one exegetic problem, for the identification of these concepts requires justifying how Spinoza's framework of relational evaluation can account for the diversity that marks his use of "human" in his writings.

The phrase "model of human nature"[22] occurs only once (in E4pref) in Spinoza's works, but the notion it signifies is introduced in his earlier TIE in terms of "a human nature much stronger and more enduring than" (G 1:28) ours, and in the KV under the label of "the idea of a perfect man" (I, 4; G 1:60). The relevance of the term "model of human nature" within the lexicon of the *Ethics* is disputed, with terms such as "free man" apparently taking its place. Moreover, its meaning is not textually clarified, leaving it open to interpretation. Yet, there is broad agreement regarding what underpins Spinoza's explanations of moral evaluations in every

[21] My claim is not that these terms are interchangeable, but rather that each denotes a different aspect of one and the same concept.

[22] For overviews on the different readings of this concept, see Rice, "*Tanquam Naturae Humanae Exemplar*: Spinoza on Human Nature", and Youpa, "Spinoza's model of human nature", pp. 61–62.

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one of his works. In most of his texts, the relevant concept is explicitly considered a being of reason that helps us formulate moral assessments. I understand this "help" as the provision of a pattern for a representation of the highest perfection of some quality, by means of which values are derived by comparison.

Values do not corresponding to real properties of things but arise from a way of comparing that, as we shall see shortly, is compatible with arbitrary standards. Evaluation, therefore, should be seen as involving tools that may shift the meaning of our ideas. This qualifies them as "beings of reason", rather than truth-bearers — that is, they are not ideas on Spinoza's understanding). Consequently, the classification of these beings of reason as either imaginative or rational becomes less relevant when we come to understand Spinoza's relational ethics, be it in its relativistic or its utilitarian variant.

However, Spinoza's account of his relational conception of moral evaluation contains a qualification that presumably depends on the origin of the representation used as a model. In both the KV and the *Ethics*, Spinoza begins by presenting and criticizing explanations utilizing such models, and then stipulates the senses in which good and evil are to be understood when used in his positive theses about moral evaluation.

His critique focuses on the partial cognitive conditions that frame the representations used as references in our everyday evaluation. These conditions reveal the situationally perspectival dimension of our assessments, which is characteristic of relational axiological approaches, and account for their constitutive variability, instability, and contextual dependence.

Even so, they appear to us as stable and context-free because of an imaginative mental process set in motion by some of our passions, which fosters the formation of an illusory systematicity. Spinoza summarizes his conclusion in phrases such as the following: "each one has judged things according to the disposition of his brain; or rather, has accepted affections of the imagination as things", or "all the notions by which ordinary people are accustomed to explain nature are only modes of imagining, and do not indicate the nature of anything, only the constitution of the imagination" (E1app; C 1:445–446/G 2:82–83). He even names the fictions involved in the mechanism he details as "beings of imagination".[23]

How should we understand Spinoza's nominal definition of human being that sets the evaluative standard in his utilitarian ethics and the resulting concepts of moral value? The very introduction of these concepts suggests that he takes this

[23] E1app: "because they have names, as if they were [notions] of beings existing outside the imagination, I call them beings, not of reason, but of imagination" (C 1:446/G 2:83; emphasis added). Note that Spinoza's rationale for calling certain fictions "beings" differs from his discussion in CM 1.1. There, he states that "beings of reason […] can be called real beings" (C 1:301/G 1:235) insofar as they are modes of thinking formally distinct from others. He also distinguishes between fictitious beings and beings of reason, qualifying the former as arbitrary compositions produced by "will alone", that is, by our mental appetites, "without any guidance from reason" (C 1:301/G 1:236). These distinctions might serve as textual support to the interpretation that will be presented next.

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nominal definition to be somewhat immune to his own critique of the arbitrary and subjective aspect of this kind of definition. But what is the basis for this belief, and in what way would the definition be exempt? Spinoza's frequent allusions to partial knowledge and imagination, everywhere he raises such critiques, along with his depiction of values as beings of reason, seem to indicate that rationality is the key attribute of the evaluative standard he proposes. However, I find this argument unconvincing.

The same subjective and relational structure and the same epistemic circumstances as those he criticizes must be preserved in Spinoza's standard of assessment. Since it is defined nominally and stipulatively, it does not need to rely on the truth or the adequacy that rational thought may afford. Moreover, the assessments it enables, like those it criticizes, are rooted in and shaped by our affections, especially our desires. Rational representations do positively affect our *conatus* and are indeed associated with active affections and rational desires. For these reasons, they surely can account for the effectiveness of the model proposed by Spinoza. However, a standard that relies solely on rational representation fails to meet the affective conditions required to motivate and guide our actions. This is why I suggest that the distinctiveness of Spinoza's standard lies not in its supposed rationality, but in the suitability of his definition to be used as a standard.

When we appraise someone or their actions, we do not say that she is good or bad here and now, but rather that she is good or bad *tout court* (in an absolute sense). For an evaluative judgement does not describe a particular relationship between two things or events — even if one of them is considered the most perfect — but has a prescriptive connotation. Therefore, it is conceptually necessary that whatever is taken as a benchmark, when conceived in a relational framework, must ground the commensurability of all evaluations that it makes possible. Usually, we name this condition the 'universality' of the standard. But if Spinoza does not in any sense hold a realist view of universals, this name may be misleading. Therefore, it will be convenient to define its meaning as I take it here: the universality of an evaluative standard as such means that it is intersubjectively recognized as the best representation of an individual who embodies the highest degree of a given quality.

It should be noted, however, that in order to be a model, a representation need not refer to something truly universal, even in the redefined sense. It is sufficient that this representation is seen by the evaluator as, so to speak, intersubjectively recognized, that is, shared (and therefore shareable) in a community of evaluators.

In E1app (G2:82–83), Spinoza meticulously demonstrates that these alleged assessments made from such a benchmark compose an aggregate that is structurally incongruent, if not inconsistent. He also explains that the efforts of our imagination, driven by our affective states, amend these discrepancies and form a systematic whole, but highlights their representational ineffectiveness. Moreover, the Preface to the TTP (G 3:5–9) offers a complementary explanation, elucidating the affects and desires that contribute to engender inconsistency, and thus the

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appetitive ineffectiveness of our effort to synthesize a coherent and stable worldview from such a precarious basis.

Therefore, beings of imagination, that is, "two terms connected by a sheer act of the will alone, without any guidance from reason" (CM 1.1; C 1:302/G 1:236) should not be taken as models because they are inherently variable, unstable, and contextually dependent—not because they are false or partial. In order to consider it as a benchmark, this fictitious being must be seen as lacking such constitutive traits. This conceptual condition, however, does not actually strip the fictitious being of those constitutive traits. Consequently, it leads to assessments that are not truly assessments but rather expressions of how we are subjectively affected by things, that is, truth-apt descriptions of the affects they produce in us.[24]

Beings of reason, like Spinoza's nominal definition of the model of human nature, rely instead on suitable representations[25] to establish genuine values, thereby enabling comparisons that are authentically evaluative. The guidance of reason in the construction of such a being of reason consists in pointing to the qualities represented *sub specie aeternitatis*, such that they are rendered by the imagination as being exemplified by one person. These rational representations endow this being of reason with what is lacking in the fictitious beings that serve as models: stability, invariance, and independence from context. However, they are in a sense distorted by the interpretation of the imagination that turns them into the image of the ideal[26] individual embodying them.

From this perspective, E4 appears to be a long and detailed elaboration of the nominal definition, announced in its preface, and of its constitution as a paradigm. Its propositions would then mobilize both imaginative and rational elements in order to demonstrate that Spinoza's idea of a [more] perfect human being meets all the requirements (representational and appetizing) of the utilitarian explanatory framework that he adopts in this part of *Ethics*. The nominal and stipulative features of Spinoza's standard do not imply that it should be abandoned. Conceived as a being of reason, it serves no cognitive purpose. On the contrary, it is precisely through these aspects that it can become a tool that helps us interact with the physical and representational elements of our environment. For insofar as we exist in duration, our knowledge relevant to our practices is inevitably partial and imaginative.

Although this analysis may seem disengaged from Spinoza's original texts and concepts, I believe that it offers valuable insights for clarifying important

[24] Unlike beings of reasons, "a fictitious being can be true by chance" (CM 1.1; G 1:236).

[25] Rosenthal ("Spinoza on Beings of Reason [*Entia Rationis*] and the Analogical Imagination") suggests an interpretation that elegantly addresses the problem at hand. He explains the formation and application of reason, and in particular the model of human nature, through what he claims to be Spinoza's version of Suarez's analogical model of attribution. This cognitive mechanism would be produced by the imagination under the guidance of reason.

[26] I understand that standards are ideal in the sense that they can be adapted by our imagination to specific contexts.

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conceptual issues addressed in this chapter. It allows us to disentangle Spinoza's account of the prescriptive meaning embedded in the beliefs by which we represent our behaviour and the world around us. And it also shows how "human being", "model of human nature", and "perfect human ideal" can be seen as the same concept, expressed under different aspects, and thus of equivalent scope.

Based on the arguments presented so far, declaring an individual as being human means that our idea of her meets the criteria for applying the term "human". So, this declaration does not directly attribute properties to an individual but helps organize (CM 1.1; G 1:234) our thoughts about her. Any classificatory term employed here in mentioning or explaining his doctrine on humans should be seen as a tool to organize our thoughts about things, rather than as an idea of a real essence. Accordingly, to say of a mind (or a body) that it is human is to say that our idea of it meets the criteria for calling it human, but also that it conveys no knowledge of what it really is independently of our perception.

The next section addresses the question of how our assessments based on the model of human nature shape our lives through a continuous process of self-interpretation.

6.4 Human Being and Self-Interpretation

Assessments are not incidental practices in our daily lives: they are integral, and have been since our earliest years, and are deeply woven into our durational existence. One can explain this ubiquity by emphasizing that assessments are key indicators of human activity, even if they do not define the human condition. Departing from this perspective, I draw on Spinoza's philosophy to make a more robust claim: assessments form the core of human life. This does not mean that the objects and circumstances of our evaluations are the external causes that shape our humanity. Rather, assessing is a complex interplay between our appetites as well as our thoughts and the external world. This practice is fundamental to our mental existence, not because it permeates every aspect of our lives, but because it is needed for organizing our thoughts and ideas. This, in turn, allows us to understand ourselves and all the remaining parts of reality.

To understand why this is so let me begin with a brief summary of Spinoza's most fundamental tenets about what he calls the "human mind", which are considered here as his conditions for applying this term as found in E2p10–14. A human mind is the enduring idea of a human body existing in duration. However, it is not so easy to extract any other criteria from this conception, even though this claim is, once established, in a way elaborated throughout the rest of the *Ethics*. Nonetheless, one does not find an explanation of the human mind as detailed as that which Spinoza provides (between E2p13–14) for the modes of extension, especially for human bodies, their principles of individuation, and the laws that govern them in their

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existences in duration. While this difference may suggest relevant exegetical issues, I will set it aside for the sake of my argument here,[27] assuming that Spinoza's account of the human body should be taken to apply *mutatis mutandis* to the human mind, but without disregarding the peculiarities of the attribute of thinking.[28]

The essence of a human mind that endures is, like that of the human body of which it is the idea, a *ratio* between the dynamic interactions of the parts that constitute its existence in duration. As long as this *ratio* remains the same, no matter how much its parts alter or change their relationship to each other, the mind continues to exist indefinitely as the same thing. This is because each such alteration triggers a reorganization of the dynamic relationship between the parts that is the result of the mind's *conatus*, which—like that of the body—ensures that it perseveres in its own being. Since the human mind is a mode of thought, one has to consider both the formal and objective aspects of how its parts interact. Both are driven by the *conatus* of singular minds, but while the former occurs without the mind needing to represent it, the latter depends on how the mind perceives its thoughts.

Putting aside here the dynamics of the interactions between the formal realities of the parts of the mind, let me focus on the interaction among the items these modes of thought make a human mind perceive. According to Spinoza, the human mind is God's knowledge of the human body and of itself. This leads to two key points. First, the knowledge that human minds have of human bodies and of themselves represents both as modified: the body as modified by affections (E2p19) and the mind as modified by the ideas of those affections (E2p23). Second the human mind endeavours to affirm the existence of the human body and of itself in duration (E3p10d).

These two consequences must be combined in order to understand what it is for the human mind to exist in duration in terms of its objective reality. If the conatus of a thing is an effort to persevere in its own being, and if the being of the objective reality of the human mind is complex and composed of dynamic interactions between the contents exhibited by its parts, then its existence in duration is characterized by the effort, while it is in its power, to organize and reorganize its parts so that the objective reality of the composite affirms the existence in duration of the body and of itself.

But the knowledge that a human mind can have of a human body and of itself involves the same partiality indicated in the narrative of Adam's sin mentioned

[27] For the same reason, I will also ignore the challenging and very relevant issues involved in understanding the claims and arguments of E2p7, and its corollary and scholium.

[28] These specificities lead to a significantly greater challenge when it comes to grasping his stance on the mind–body relationship, arising from the need to differentiate between an idea as being a mode of thought and as being a representation of something. In this discussion, I will use the terms "formal reality" and "objective reality" strictly to denote the sides of this distinction, without engaging with the interpretations of these terms by seventeenth-century thinkers.

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earlier. For the human mind does not know the body and itself other than being modified. Therefore, the ideas related to this knowledge may assume a prescriptive tone and require the imagining of an authority. As human minds, because they are in duration, the activity of affirming the actual existence of the body and of itself has to construe this prescriptive knowledge and needs the help of a representational standard to organize its parts.

Thus, the affirmation of the existence of the human body and the human mind takes the form of a self-interpretation[29] that presents to the human mind what it ought to be. This presentation is used by the mind to organize its thoughts from a model, so that the process of self-interpretation is carried out through various evaluations. The ever-present assessments in a life called human are rooted in the most basic process by which each individual mind endeavours to persist in its own being, and to the extent that it adopts the model of human nature as its standard.

6.5 Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has argued that to be human is a *desideratum* that stipulatively guides and shapes a life as human.

"Human being" is another name for what Spinoza refers to in E4Pref as the idea of a man formed to serve as a model of human nature. Both terms, as well as others found in his works and only mentioned here, signify a being of reason that is meant to structure a genuine evaluative framework for our practical evaluations. As such, it has no epistemic purpose. Instead, it is a compass designed to help our finite minds find their way in our political and physical world insofar as it serves as a standard for knowing who we are. Its value lies in its instrumental applications, not in its theoretical adequacy and truth, and should only be measured by how much it helps us.

To accomplish this task, this being of reason must motivate our affections, especially our desire to imitate it, both through its formal reality as an existing way of thinking and through what it makes us think. This is why it involves a personification of the qualities it prescribes in the form of an ideal individual, imaginatively interpreted as the archetype of our perfection, showing us a way of life to aspire to.

The model of human nature shapes our lives and authorizes the application of "human" to us insofar as it plays a central role in the dynamics that constitute the durations of our minds. This dynamic is efficiently caused by our mind's *conatus*, which is an effort to persevere in its own formal and objective being the affirmation of its own present existence, as well as the body that is its *ideatum*.

[29] For a more detailed argument in favour of this claim, see Levy, "*L'Automate spirituel. La subjectivé moderne d'après* l'Ethique *de Spinoza*", part IV.

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Objectively considered, the activities promoted by the conatus of our mind, insofar as they are in its power, consist in continuous rearrangements of our modes of thought that ensure they continue to express our self-knowledge to us, through the mediation of a pattern of evaluations that stably and invariably prescribes a better way of living.

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7

The Idea of the Idea, Consciousness, and Human Experience in Spinoza's *Ethics*

Oliver Istvan Toth

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When discussing Spinoza's notion of consciousness (*conscientia*), we face three fundamental difficulties.[1] First, it is not clear what the notion of consciousness refers to, that is, what kind of mental phenomenon is described with the help of this term. Second, it is not clear whether this notion is used according to a coherent theory of consciousness, or in a more informal manner. Third, even if Spinoza had a coherent theory of consciousness, it is unclear what the systematic role of this theory is in his philosophy, that is, what further phenomena or elements in his philosophy are explained by the term 'consciousness'. Let me briefly elaborate on these points.

The first difficulty arises because Spinoza wrote at a time when the modern meaning of the term 'consciousness' was not yet fixed. In scholasticism, the meaning of 'conscientia' was closely related to what we call 'conscience', a higher-order reflective act of appraisal about a first-order mental act.[2] In Descartes's philosophy, where the term with the modern meaning takes a central role, the scholastic meaning of the term was still present.[3] An interpretation of Spinoza's notion of consciousness that aims to do more than merely show patterns in the occurrence of the word *conscientia* in Spinoza's corpus needs to link Spinoza's

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[2] Diemer, "Bewusstsein"; Reiner, "Gewissen".

[3] See especially: Balibar, *Identity and Difference: John Locke & the Invention of Consciousness*.

Oliver Istvan Toth, *The Idea of the Idea, Consciousness, and Human Experience in Spinoza's* Ethics In: *Spinoza on the Human Perspective*. Edited by: Ursula Renz, Sarah Tropper, Oliver Istvan Toth, Barnaby R. Hutchins, and Philip Waldner, Oxford University Press. © Ursula Renz, Sarah Tropper, Oliver Istvan Toth, Barnaby R. Hutchins, Philip Waldner 2026. DOI: 10.1093/9780198927686.003.0008

theory to a problem that is intelligible to contemporary readers in the terminology of contemporary philosophy.[4] This poses a challenge because the contemporary terminology of consciousness has proliferated. For instance, analytic philosophers distinguish between phenomenal consciousness and access consciousness. For the reader not familiar with these terms, let me briefly state what I mean by them; the reader familiar with these terms can jump to the next paragraph. 'Phenomenal consciousness' refers to the experiential quality of a mental state, 'what it is like' to be in that mental state. For example, the painful quality of one's tactile sensation of boiling water belongs to phenomenal consciousness: it is perfectly possible to have the same representation of the tactile sensation without the accompanying painful quality. 'Access consciousness' refers to the subject's ability to use the content of a mental state in her practical and theoretical inferences. For example, one is conscious of one's full cup of coffee in one's visual field if one can infer that one does not need to make another coffee yet. By contrast, one is not conscious of the fly struggling for its life in the coffee, also in one's visual field, if one does not take the fly into consideration when deciding whether to drink the coffee and would be surprised to hear that there is a fly in the coffee.[5]

The second difficulty arises from the problem that Spinoza's claims about consciousness seem to be in tension with one another, which has led some authors to question whether it is possible to extract a coherent notion of consciousness from Spinoza's texts.[6]

On the one hand, E2p20–23 (C 1:467–468/G 2:108–110) state that there is in the human mind an idea of every idea. The higher-order theory interpretations of Spinoza's notion of consciousness rely on the use of E2p20–23 in demonstrations in the third part of the *Ethics* in interpreting Spinoza's claims about ideas of ideas in E2p20–23 as committing him to the view that consciousness is constituted by higher-order ideas about first-order ideas. Given that an idea is either represented by a higher-order idea or not, higher-order interpretations take it that consciousness is a binary property constituted by the ideas of ideas.[7] However, every idea is supposed to have a corresponding idea of it, which makes it difficult to explain, first, how Spinoza distinguishes self-conscious minds from non-self-conscious

[4] For different considerations of whether such an ambition can be reasonable, and if so, in what way, see: Lærke, "The Anthropological Analogy and the Constitution of Historical Perspectivism"; Garber, "Superheroes in the History of Philosophy"; Della Rocca, "Interpreting Spinoza"; Mercer, "The Contextualist Revolution in Early Modern Philosophy"; Toth, "A Defense of Reconstructivism".

[5] For a general overview of different kinds of consciousness in contemporary analytic philosophy, see: Block, "On a Confusion about a Function of Consciousness"; Ravenscroft, *Philosophy of Mind. A Beginner's Guide*, pp. 159–189.

[6] See Miller, "The Status of Consciousness in Spinoza's Concept of Mind"; LeBuffe, "Theories about Consciousness in Spinoza's Ethics".

[7] Curley, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, pp. 128–129; Martin, "Consciousness in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind"; Sangiacomo, "Adequate Knowledge and Bodily Complexity in Spinoza's Account of Consciousness"; Marrama, "Consciousness, Ideas of Ideas and Animation in Spinoza's Ethics".

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beings,[8] and second, how Spinoza distinguishes conscious ideas in the mind from unconscious ideas.[9]

On the other hand, Spinoza claims in E5p42s (C 1:616–617/G 2:308) that the wise person is more conscious than the ignorant, which power-based or complexity-based interpretations take to indicate that consciousness comes in degrees. Such readings claim that Spinoza's notion of consciousness is a scalar property correlated with power or complexity.[10] Assuming that sensory ideas of imagination rather than cognitive ideas of the intellect constitute consciousness, it is not easy to see how the scalar reading can account for Spinoza's text. If the ignorant person's mind is constituted by many ideas of imagination and very few ideas of intellect, whereas the wise person's mind is constituted by few ideas of imagination and many ideas of intellect, it is unclear how the wise could be more and not less conscious than the ignorant.[11]

As a further complication, Michael LeBuffe has identified three different uses of the term 'consciousness' in the examples in Spinoza's *Ethics*, namely, 'intensional use', 'extensional use', and 'knowledge use'. Say that I want to describe a situation where I am conscious of a thing before me as my cup of coffee, although the thing represented is not really my cup of coffee, but a plastic object that is not even apt to hold any liquid. If I describe this situation by saying 'I am conscious of my cup of coffee', focusing on how the object presents itself to me, I make an intensional use of the term 'consciousness'. By contrast, someone else who knows the real object represented in my mind could describe the same situation by saying, 'Oliver Toth is conscious of the fake plastic object'; this observer, then, makes 'extensional use' of the term 'consciousness'. Finally, there is also 'knowledge use', which LeBuffe takes Spinoza to use in special situations where a subject's consciousness veridically reflects the object in question. This would be the case if my consciousness of my cup of coffee truly represents my cup of coffee.[12]

The third difficulty arises because it is unclear what exactly Spinoza intended to explain with a notion of consciousness. In Descartes's philosophy, consciousness plays a central role as a mark of the mental, by which the mind is identified as a substance distinct from the body. However, Spinoza denies both that the mind is distinct from the body and that the mind is a substance; this is why Gilles Deleuze argued that Spinoza uses the term 'consciousness' in a polemical way to distance

[8] This is usually referred to as the 'pan problem' in the literature, which refers to the question of whether Spinoza is committed to the view that even a frying pan is conscious to some degree.

[9] This is usually referred to as the 'pancreas problem' in the literature.

[10] Malinowski-Charles, "Emotions as the Engines of Spinoza's Ethics"; Nadler, "Spinoza and Consciousness"; Garrett, "Representation and Consciousness in Spinoza's Naturalistic Theory of the Imagination"; Marshall, *The Spiritual Automaton. Spinoza's Science of the Mind*.

[11] The reason for this assumption is that ideas of intellect are eternal and thus do not easily lend themselves to variations required for the explanation of variation in consciousness as a scalar property: Huenemann, "The Sage Meets the Zombie".

[12] LeBuffe, "Theories about Consciousness in Spinoza's Ethics".

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his philosophy—based on the knowledge of the body—from Descartes's—based on the knowledge of conscious mental states. For Spinoza, the unconscious—the meanings existing as real bodily efficient causes—rather than the conscious—the senses and intentions formulated as formal and final causes—take centre stage.[13]

In this chapter, I aim to provide an interpretation of Spinoza's theory of consciousness that can provide answers to all three problems. In the first section, I argue that consciousness refers to access consciousness rather than to phenomenal consciousness. I do that by following Daniel Garber in discerning four argumentative contexts in which Spinoza uses consciousness, and by elaborating on this distinction. In the second section, I provide a close reading of Spinoza's introduction of the term 'ideas of ideas' in E2p21s. I argue that this term refers to the *way* in which a subject's mind takes a representation of some modification of her body *as* representing something external. In the third section, I argue—by developing an argument from Samuel Newlands—that consciousness plays a constructive role for Spinoza in constituting one's self. If Spinoza's philosophy is to be a philosophy for humans, as Ursula Renz has argued, then it must be a philosophy of consciousness rather than a philosophy of being.

7.1 What Is Consciousness for Spinoza?

The terminology of 'consciousness' is used in Spinoza's *Ethics* in four argumentative contexts: (1) freedom of will, (2) desire, (3) good and evil, and (4) eternity.[14]

(1) Spinoza's first uses of this terminology are related to his remarks concerning the illusion of free will: people are 'conscius' of their actions without knowing the causes of their actions. That is why they believe themselves to be free, even if they are not (E1app, C 1:440/G 2:78; E2p35s, C1:473/G 2:117; E3p2s, C 1:496–497/G 2:143; E4prae, C 1:544–545/G 2:207). In all these cases, Spinoza contrasts the subject's consciousness (*conscius*) with her lack of knowledge (*ignarus*).

(2) A second use is found in the definition of desire (E3daI, C 1:531/G 2:190; cf. E3p9&s, C 1:499–500/G 2:147–148), where Spinoza defines desire as the way in which the subject is conscious (*conscius*) of her appetite. He supports this claim by referring to E2p23, which is about the way in which the mind

[13] Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. This distinction has been discussed by Justin Steinberg as the distinction between *de re* wide content—i.e., what the idea represents as a link in the infinite chain of causes—and *de dicto* narrow content—i.e., what the idea represents as a causal function in the human mind: Steinberg, "Spinoza on Human Purposiveness and Mental Causation".

[14] There are some further uses of the word *conscientia* (e.g., in *conscientiæ morsus*). There is, however, a scholarly consensus that the word does not have the meaning that is of interest here in these cases: Marrama, "Consciousness, Ideas of Ideas and Animation in Spinoza's Ethics", p. 510; Garber, "Spinoza's Non-Theory of Non-Consciousness", p. 313.

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cognizes (*cognoscere*) itself. Likewise, in E3p30d (C 1:510–511/G 2:163) Spinoza talks about people's having an idea of themselves as people being conscious (*conscius*) of themselves.

(3) A third use of the term centres around E4p8 (C1:550–551/G 2:215–216), where Spinoza states that the cognition (*cognitio*) of good and evil is joy and sadness insofar as the subject is conscious (*conscius*) of them. E4p8 is, too, based on Part Two: it asserts that any affect of joy or sadness cannot solely consist in an idea of the body's affection, but—following E2p21—there must also be an idea of the idea of this affection with which it is united.

(4) The fourth use is related to Spinoza's remarks about the eternity of the mind. In E5p31s (C 1:610/G 2:300), Spinoza states that the more a subject succeeds in having cognitions (*cognitio*) of the third kind, the more she is conscious (*conscius*) of God and herself. In E5p39s (C 1:614/G 2:305), likewise, Spinoza states that those with an incapable body are conscious (*conscius*) of almost nothing of God, of themselves, and things. By contrast, those with a very capable body are very much conscious (*conscius*) of God, themselves, and things. He further states in E5p34s (C 1:611–612/G 2:301–302) that everyone is conscious (*conscius*) of the eternity of their mind, even if they confuse it with duration. In E5p42s (C 1:616–617/G 2:308), finally, Spinoza contrasts the wise man, who is conscious (*conscius*) of himself and God, and whose mind has a great eternal part, with the ignorant, who does not know (*inscius*) God and himself, and whose mind is durational.

The question arises: is there a feature of human mental life to which the word *conscius* refers in all its uses? This is not immediately clear. Yet, as Daniel Garber has shown, there is a clear negative statement to be made: nothing in any of these occurrences indicates that the term refers to what we would call today 'phenomenal consciousness'.[15] Instead, there is abundant evidence that 'consciousness' refers to a kind of knowledge (*cognitio*). First, Spinoza takes 'conscious' and 'consciousness' to be the opposites of lack of knowledge and being 'ignorant'. For example, in E5p42s, Spinoza discerns the wise and conscious man from the ignorant, and in E1app, E2p35s, E3p2s, and E4prae, Spinoza contrasts consciousness of one's actions with lack of knowledge about the causes of those actions. Second, Spinoza uses E2p20–23, which are about the mind's knowledge of itself, to demonstrate propositions about consciousness in E3p9dem, E3p30dem, and E4p8dem.

This suggests that what Spinoza describes by the term 'consciousness' is neither the experiential character of having certain ideas nor the vividness of that experience, but rather what is called 'access consciousness' in contemporary analytic philosophy, that is, the way in which the content of a mental state can feature in the

[15] Garber, "Spinoza's Non-Theory of Non-Consciousness".

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mind's theoretical and practical inferences. The first group of texts claims that the subject can make inference from and about her actions but not the causes of her actions. The second group claims that one's appetite is not directly available to the subject's reasoning, but only if it is present as a desire. The third group claims that reasoning about good and evil is only possible by accessing one's joyful and sad affects, not by accessing some other postulated entities, for example moral facts. The fourth group claims that the more adequate the mind's ideas, the more accessible to one's reasoning oneself, God, and 'things' (probably external bodies) are. I will come back to a more detailed analysis of these claims at the end of the second section, but we can already establish that Spinoza nowhere refers by 'consciousness' to the phenomenal experience of having ideas, the 'what it is like' character. This indicates that Ursula Renz and Oberto Marrama are right when they claim that Spinoza used a different term—sensation or animation, respectively—to make claims about what is called 'phenomenal consciousness' in contemporary discourse.[16]

If this is accepted, some difficulties can be easily removed. First, take Spinoza's claim in E5p42s that the ignorant person is less conscious than the wise. If 'consciousness' referred to phenomenal consciousness, the claim would be that the ignorant person's mental life is duller than the mental life of the wise person. But this claim is not found in Spinoza's text and it is directly contradicted by the circumstantial evidence of Descartes's philosophy: according to Descartes, the less powerful mind cannot access its innate ideas of God, itself, and external bodies because it is continuously distracted by its vivid sensations.[17] If, however, 'consciousness' refers to access consciousness, the claim is that fewer objects are accessible to the ignorant person's reasoning than to the wise person.

Second, Spinoza's references to E2p20–23 suggest that he takes ideas of ideas to be the basis of consciousness. Since, however, every idea has an idea, it is not clear whether Spinoza can present an account of consciousness that is able to, on the one hand, distinguish conscious minds from non-conscious ones, and, on the other, conscious ideas in the human mind from the unconscious ones.[18] If 'consciousness' refers to access consciousness rather than phenomenal consciousness, the first difficulty disappears. Distinguishing conscious and nonconscious beings is not the task of a theory about access consciousness. A theory of access consciousness is about the scope of reasoning and not about the distinction between conscious beings and philosophical zombies.[19] This indicates that the real challenge

[16] Renz, "The Definition of the Human Mind and the Numerical Difference between Subjects (2P11–2P13S)"; Renz, *The Explainability of Experience*, pp. 164–165; Renz, "Finite Subjects in the Ethics: Spinoza on Indexical Knowledge, the First Person and the Individuality of Human Minds"; Marrama, "Consciousness, Ideas of Ideas and Animation in Spinoza's Ethics".

[17] LeBuffe, "Theories about Consciousness in Spinoza's Ethics", pp. 541–542.

[18] Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, pp. 184–192.

[19] See Huenemann, "The Sage Meets the Zombie".

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for Spinoza's account of consciousness is to distinguish unconscious ideas from conscious ones, that is, to distinguish ideas available for reasoning from those ideas that can only be discovered by inference from behaviour. If Spinoza wants to distinguish self-conscious and not self-conscious minds, he makes that distinction with the help of other vocabulary.

7.2 Does Spinoza Have a Unified Notion of Consciousness?

So far, we have seen that Spinoza's understanding of 'conscientia' can nicely be captured as referring to 'access consciousness'. The question arises: does this suffice to attribute to Spinoza a unified and coherent conception of consciousness? In order to answer this question, I provide a close reading of the way in which Spinoza introduces his term 'idea of the idea' in E2p20–23, which is the only group of propositions that are explicitly used in demonstrations of claims about consciousness.

Spinoza first introduces the notion of there being 'ideas of ideas' in E2p20, which reads as follows:

> There is also in God an idea, *or* cognition, of the human mind, which follows in God in the same way and is related to God in the same way as the idea, *or* cognition, of the human body. (C 1:467/G 2:108; translation modified)

The proposition rests on E2p7 (C1:451–452/G 2:89–90) which states that every existing thing is represented by an idea. On this basis, E2p20 states that the human mind is an existing thing, which must be represented by an idea.[20]

In E2p21, Spinoza develops this claim by explaining that "[t]his idea of the mind is united to the mind in the same way as the mind is united to the body" (E2p21 C 1:467/G 2:109). As Spinoza states in E2p21s, both E2p21 and its scholium are most clearly understood from E2p7, which states that an idea and its objects are 'one and the same thing'. The mind is the idea of the human body: therefore, the human mind and its object, the human body, are one and the same individual. If the relationship between the human mind and its idea is the same as between the body and the mind, then the idea of the human mind and the human mind must be one and the same individual as well.[21]

Consider now how, in E2p21s, this identity between the human mind and its idea is elaborated on:

[20] Later, Spinoza makes the more general claim in E2p22 that every idea in the human mind is an existing thing and, consequently, must be represented by an additional idea.

[21] In E2p23, Spinoza makes the same claim with reference to the ideas of the ideas of affections of the human body: the higher-order idea is here also one and the same individual as the first-order idea of the affection of the human body.

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> For the idea of the mind, i.e., the idea of the idea, is nothing but the form of the idea insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object. For as soon as someone knows something, he thereby knows that he knows it, and at the same time knows that he knows that he knows, and so on, to infinity. (C 1:467–468/G 2:109)

Here, Spinoza not only introduces the technical term 'idea of the idea'; he also writes that the 'idea of the idea [. . .] is nothing but the form of the idea'. The question is what he meant to express or emphasize by this description.

Jonathan Bennett has proposed—following Gueroult—to read 'form of the idea' as 'formal reality of the idea'. This reading is based on the Cartesian distinction between 'formal reality' and 'objective reality'. A thing is taken to exist with formal reality ('formally') insofar as it has mind-independent existence. By contrast, a thing exists with objective reality ('objectively') insofar as it is represented in a mind. For example, my cup of coffee exists formally on my table. The same cup of coffee, however, exists objectively in my mind, when represented in my perception.[22]

That this terminology plays a central role in Spinoza's philosophy, and in particular in E2p7, is a widely shared view,[23] whence Bennett's reading of E2p21s seems legitimate. On his view, Spinoza's claim in E2p21 is simple: E2p7 states that everything existing with formal reality must also exist with objective reality in some idea. Not only does the formal reality of the human body exist with objective reality in the human mind, but there must be also an idea in which the formal reality of the human mind can exist with objective reality. This is the idea of the idea.[24]

How satisfying is this view? Consider, to begin with, what the crucial sentence is taken to state on Bennett's account: "the idea of the idea [represents] nothing but the [formal reality] of the idea insofar as this is considered as a mode of thinking without relation to the object" (E2p21s, C 1:467–468/G 2:109).[25] The advantage of this reading is obvious: it can easily explain Spinoza's reference to the 'form of the idea' by considering the idea as a mode of thinking without relation to the object. But this solution has its costs, since it requires a far-reaching intervention in the text. Not only should we read 'form' as meaning 'formal reality', but also 'is' as 'represented'. Bennett justifies this intervention by pointing out that unless we take the idea of idea *x* to represent just the formal reality of the idea *x*, we cannot distinguish

[22] Clarke, *Descartes's Theory of Mind*, pp. 190–191.
[23] Donagan, "Homo Cogitat: Spinoza's Doctrine and Some Recent Commentators"; Lærke, "Aspects of Spinoza's Theory of Essence: Formal Essence, Non-Existence, and Two Types of Actuality"; Hübner, "Representation and Mind-Body Identity in Spinoza's Philosophy".
[24] Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, pp. 185–186.
[25] Cf. Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics,* p. 186.

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the idea of the idea of *x* from the idea of *x*, in which case, the tower of higher-order ideas would collapse into its ground-floor idea, to use Bennett's metaphor.

However, the manoeuvre by which Bennett prevents ideas of ideas from collapsing into ground-floor ideas also has its price. Consider, in particular, Spinoza's definition of the idea of the idea in its textual context: in the sentence following the introduction of the term 'idea of the idea', Spinoza states that one knows that one knows as soon as one knows. This is naturally read as the claim that one does not merely know that one has an act of knowing but also one knows what one knows. If I know that *p*, I do not merely know that I know *something*, I know that I know that *p*. However, Bennett's reading suggests that it is precisely the representational content of the first-order idea that is not represented by the second-order idea. It is unclear how the idea of the idea of *x*—representing the formal reality of idea *x* without its objective reality, that is, without its representing *x*—could account for the fact that I not only know that I know something but also that I know that *p*. On this reading, it is precisely *p* which is *not* represented by my idea of the idea of *x*.[26] It thus seems that we face two unattractive options: either the idea of the idea *x* represents everything about the idea of *x*, in which case the tower of higher-order ideas collapses, or the idea of the idea of *x* represents only the formal reality of idea *x*, in which case the role of higher-order ideas in grounding reflexive knowledge of acts of knowing remains unclear.

This problem, however, can be resolved, if we place Spinoza's definition of the 'idea of the idea' next to Descartes's definitions of 'thinking' and 'idea' in the Geometrical Exposition at the end of the Second Set of Replies, which definitions are quoted verbatim in Spinoza's *Principles of Cartesian Philosophy*. There, Descartes writes:

> I. *Thought* (cogitatio). I use this term to include everything that is within us in such a way that we are immediately aware (*conscii*) of it. Thus all the operations of the will, the intellect, the imagination and the senses are thoughts. I say 'immediately' so as to exclude the consequences of thoughts; a voluntary movement, for example, originates in a thought but is not itself a thought.
>
> II. *Idea*. I understand this term to mean the form of any given thought, immediate perception of which makes me aware (*conscius*) of the thought. Hence, whenever I express something in words, and understand what I am saying, this very fact makes it certain that there is within me an idea of what is signified by the words in question.[27]

Note that the way in which the term *conscius* is used in these definitions is strikingly similar to some of Spinoza's uses in the *Ethics*. Descartes's claim is that idea is the

[26] The point is even more obvious if we assume that $x = p$.
[27] CSM 2:113/AT 7:160; cf. *PPC* 1d1–2 C 1:238–239/G 1:149.

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'form of thought', the perception of which (the form) makes the mind aware of the thought.[28] We will come back in a minute to the question of what this means. For now, let's note the similarity to Spinoza's claim that the 'idea of an idea' is the 'form of the idea', and this form seems to play a similar function as in Descartes: just as the form of thought makes the thought conscious in Descartes, the form of the idea makes the idea conscious in Spinoza. It may seem that there is an obvious terminological difference here, since Descartes's 'thought' refers to what Spinoza calls 'idea', and 'idea' to what Spinoza calls 'idea of idea'. However, given Spinoza's well-attested tendency to reduce every mental phenomenon to his category of idea, this is not surprising.[29] Still, one might worry whether the suggested parallel holds.

Let us, therefore, take a look at the precise argumentative role Descartes's distinction between thought and idea has in his account. As Lilli Alanen explains, in this passage, Descartes distinguishes the act of cognition from the object of cognition.[30] Deborah Brown develops this reading further by arguing that the act and the content of cognition are distinguishable only by rational reflection: they are not separable parts out of which one mental state is composed. Instead, the view is that the mental state is what results when an act of the mind, or its representational properties, is transformed by establishing a relation between the act and some particular content.[31] We can illustrate Brown's point by the same example again: according to the Cartesian theory, the act of my perception of the cup of coffee comes about because the movements of the animal spirits in my brain bring about a mental image in my mind (the 'thought') that depicts a larger white patch with a smaller brown patch in it. This image is taken to be about my cup of coffee by my mind because the mind 'refers' or relates the image to the external object (the 'idea'): I take the white patch with the brown patch in it *as* representing my cup of coffee, which transforms the representational properties of my act of cognition. Whiteness, for example, ceases to be properly predicable about my act of sensation and becomes properly predicable about my cup of coffee.[32] This indicates that Descartes uses the term 'form' in his definition of idea, not as a shorthand for 'formal reality' (which, indeed, he never does anywhere); instead, we can surmise that he to uses the term 'form' as a synonym for 'essence', which he does quite frequently when talking about mental states.[33]

[28] For a nuanced discussion of the role of reflexive ideas in Descartes's theory of consciousness, see: Lähteenmäki, "Orders of Consciousness and Forms of Reflexivity in Descartes".

[29] Della Rocca, "The Power of an Idea: Spinoza's Critique of Pure Will".

[30] Alanen, *Descartes's Concept of Mind*, p. 114.

[31] Brown, "Objective Being in Descartes".

[32] This transformation is necessary if it is possible to form veridical ideas at all. Unless the representational property is properly predicable of the external object, strictly speaking every idea purportedly representing an external body would be deceptive ('materially false'), even if my cup of coffee really *is* white, since the representational content would represent my mental image rather than the external body.

[33] See, for example, AT 7:60/CSM 2:41, AT 7:61/CSM 2:42, AT 7:78/CSM 2:54. Especially telling is Descartes's identification of the meaning of the two terms in AT 7:64/CSM 2:45: "natura, sive essentia, sive forma".

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How can we read Spinoza's description of the idea of an idea in terms of the form of idea against this background? In a nutshell, my proposal is to read the relation between 'idea of the idea' and 'idea' along the lines of Descartes's distinction between 'idea' and 'thought'; moreover, I propose to reconstruct them in connection with a difference pointed out by Don Garrett between *objectum* and *ideatum*. That is, I take the first-order idea to represent the modification of the body brought about by the external body—what Garrett calls the *objectum* of the idea: "the *objectum* of an idea is simply the thing that it parallels and with which it is "one and the same"— and hence, on Spinoza's account, that whose "objective" reality it contains.[34] By contrast, I take the higher-order idea to represent the first-order idea *as* representing an external object—what Garrett calls the *ideatum*: "whatever [the idea] is 'of' in a sense that is broad enough to include the contents of imaginative representation".[35] On this reading, the higher-order idea is not idle because it transforms the representational content of the first-order idea for the given mind. If my first-order idea representing the modification of my body (the *objectum*) brought about by my cup of coffee represents in God's mind that modification of my body, then the same idea represents in my mind my cup of coffee, and it does so because there is a second-order idea that represents the first order idea *as* representing my cup of coffee (the *ideatum*). For this reason, it is natural to say that my idea is true insofar as the representational properties of it are properly predicable of the external body, that is, if my idea shows my cup of coffee *as* white and my cup of coffee really is white.[36]

Accepting this reading has several advantages: (1) it can account for the role of E2p20–23 in Spinoza's theory of consciousness; (2) it can explain Spinoza's change of terminology relative to Descartes; (3) it can make sense of the text of E2p21s; and (4) it can sustain a unified reading of Spinoza's notion of 'consciousness'. Let me elaborate on these advantages a bit.

(1) This reading can explain the role of E2p20–23 by assuming that this passage aims to clarify how the mind establishes what a particular first-order idea represents for the given mind, that is, what the given mind takes itself to know through that first-order idea. This is also why I take this passage to be the place where Spinoza develops his theory of consciousness: if Spinoza means by 'consciousness' what contemporary analytic philosophers call access consciousness, it is natural that E2p20–23 should serve as the basis for Spinoza's theory of consciousness.

[34] Garrett, "Representation, Misrepresentation, and Error in Spinoza's Philosophy of Mind", p. 435.

[35] Ibid. Other authors have also discussed the distinction, but without proposing a strict terminological distinction in Spinoza's text: Radner, "Spinoza's Theory of Ideas"; Lenz, "Intentionality without Objectivity? Spinoza's Theory of Intentionality". LeBuffe has shown that Spinoza uses the word *repraesentare* exclusively as describing the relation between the idea and *ideatum* and never as describing the relation between the idea and *objectum*: LeBuffe, *From Bondage to Freedom*, pp. 62–65.

[36] Cf. E1a6. For the sake of brevity, I bracket the question of whether an extended mode can be really white.

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(2) This reading can also explain Spinoza's change in terminology relative to Descartes's definition of the idea as a 'form of thought'. For Descartes, sensations are really distinct from the bodily modification causing them.[37] For Spinoza, sensations are one and the same as the bodily modifications they represent. This explains why Spinoza would describe sensation as an idea rather than a thought: every mode of thought, including sensations, represents something.

(3) This reading can also account for the text of E2p21s. According to my proposed reading, every idea can be considered either in relation to its *objectum* or its *ideatum*. The higher-order idea is the essence of the idea, insofar as the latter is considered in relation to the *ideatum*. It is natural to assume that the object represented by an idea is essential for the given idea: if two ideas represent different objects, they cannot be the same idea. The higher-order idea determines that the lower-order idea represents an external object for the given mind, that is, the higher-order idea determines the essence of the idea in the given mind. This explains Spinoza's claim that we know that we know when we know: if the higher-order idea represents the first-order idea as representing some external object, we know by the same higher-order idea that the idea as an act of knowing represents the external object for us.

By contrast, when an idea is considered in relation to its *objectum*, that is, as being identical to the modification of the human body, then this higher-order idea is not the essence of the idea. Still, consideration of ideas upon this non-essential relation has its value. Let's say I am informed that the object of my perception that I took to be my cup of coffee is actually a fake plastic object. In this case, my higher-order idea changes and I start to represent my first order ideas as the representation of a fake plastic object. Even though its intentional object has changed, it is natural to consider my newly acquired idea of the fake plastic object as identical to my previous idea of my cup of coffee in some sense. On Spinoza's account this is so because even if the object represented by an idea is exchanged, it is still the same act of cognition, insofar as it is identical to the same modification in my body.

(4) Finally, my reading can also support a unified interpretation of Spinoza's notion of consciousness, that is, it enables us to make sense of his use of the terminology of *conscientia* in the several contexts I have identified in the previous section without presuming any shifts in its meaning. Consider, to begin with, the first group of texts. Spinoza claims that the illusion of free will arises because we are conscious of our actions, but not of its causes. Reading this claim in light of the above proposal, Spinoza's point seems to be that it is by virtue of our higher-order ideas, or consciousness, that we represent the movements of our bodies as constituting free actions. What happens, in other words, is that the second-order idea represents the first-order idea (which has the bodily movement as its *objectum*)

[37] Deleuze, *Spinoza*, p. 18.

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as representing (as its *ideatum*) a free action. I perceive, for example, my act of grabbing my cup of coffee as resulting from my decision rather than from an infinite chain of bodily causes. And I thus have cognitive access to what I take to be my action, but not to the causes of my actions, which is why I fall prey to the illusion of free will.

The second group of texts concerns Spinoza's definition of desire in terms of the appetite together with the consciousness of it. I read this as the claim that an appetite, which is itself constituted by a first-order idea representing the striving of the body as its *objectum*, is at the same time represented in desire *as* the mind being directed at an external object. For example, I feel an urge pushing me in the direction of my cup of coffee, which I represent *as* a desire for coffee.[38]

The third group of texts concerns Spinoza's claims that knowledge of good and evil is nothing but a joyful and sad affect together with the consciousness of it. Given my reading, Spinoza's point here is that good and evil are not the kind of features that could ever be represented as the *objectum* of an idea, but are only *ideata* of second-order ideas. For example, when I drink my cup of coffee and the hot liquid burns my tongue, it is a second-order idea that represents this pain *as* representing the badness of too-hot coffee, which causes me to avoid too-hot coffee in the future.

The fourth group of texts concerns eternity, in which Spinoza voices two relatively independent claims. The first is that the more adequate ideas the mind has, the more it is conscious of itself, God, and things. Following my reading, the supposition here is that the more adequate our ideas are, the higher proportion of our ideas' *ideata* is real rather than fictional. For example, once my second-order idea represents my first-order idea as being about the fake plastic object rather than about my cup of coffee, my cognitive access to reality has improved. I think about an object that really exists and is not merely imagined by me.[39] Depending on what the object of my idea is, I can thus improve my cognitive access to myself, to God, and to external bodies this way.

The second claim is that everyone is conscious of the eternity of their mind even if they confuse it with duration. I read this claim as stating that the eternal part of a mind is what is necessarily contained by its first-order ideas, even if it features in the *ideatum* only under exceptional circumstances. For example, the modification of my body brought about by my cup of coffee necessarily involves the essence of my body. But this essence of my body is also the *objectum* of the idea constituting the essence of my mind and thus constitutes the eternal part of my mind.[40] And eternal it remains, even if, due to some second-order idea, the first-order idea

[38] See Carriero, "Spinoza on Final Causality"; Lenz, *Socializing Minds*, pp. 36–41.

[39] See Sangiacomo, "Adequate Knowledge and Bodily Complexity in Spinoza's Account of Consciousness", p. 86; Boros, "Life as Death in Spinoza"; Carlisle, *Spinoza's Religion*.

[40] E5p29; see Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind That Is Eternal"; Lærke, "Spinoza on the Eternity of the Mind".

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constituting the mind is taken to represent as its *ideatum* only durational and corruptible beings. I only misrepresent the eternity of my mind as durational, while its *objectum* remains the same.

I conclude by showing the way in which my proposed interpretation can solve the discrepancies in Spinoza's use of the term 'consciousness' diagnosed by LeBuffe. In all cases, the term 'consciousness' refers to the way in which an object is presented to the mind. 'Extensional' and 'intensional' uses of the term 'consciousness' refer to cases where there is a mismatch between the *objectum* and *ideatum*. Returning to the same example, when I say that 'I am conscious of my cup of coffee', even if there is really just a fake plastic object in front of me, I am talking about the way in which the *ideatum* is presented to me. By contrast, when someone says that 'Oliver Toth is conscious of the fake plastic object', they are talking about the way in which the *objectum* of my first-order idea, which involves the nature of the fake plastic object, is presented to me, even if I am confused about this. Finally, 'knowledge use' refers to the case when the *objectum* and *ideatum* overlap to a certain degree. When I say 'now, I am conscious of the plastic object', the *ideatum* that presents itself in my idea is involved in the *objectum* of the first-order idea.

7.3 What Does Spinoza Use the Notion of Consciousness for?

Where does this interpretation leave us with respect to the argumentative role of the concept of consciousness in Spinoza's philosophy? Did Spinoza use the term 'consciousness' polemically in order to distinguish his philosophy from Descartes's, as claimed by Deleuze? Is consciousness the realm of inadequate ideas, as also claimed by Deleuze, giving rise to the illusion of formal and final causes that the philosopher should ignore while focusing instead on the realm of unconscious ideas representing efficient causes? I argue on the basis of Samuel Newlands' recent account of Spinozistic selves that consciousness plays a constructive role in Spinoza's philosophy by constituting the self of the human mind.

Newlands argues that, for Spinoza, higher-order representations constitute the individual's self and determine the individual's causal responsibility. Newlands' claim takes its inspiration from deep-self theories, which hold that an individual is only causally responsible for a change that the individual has appropriated. According to deep-self theories, it is perfectly possible to experience a desire in one's mind and still deny that it is one's desire. Newlands' claim is that first-order ideas in the human mind do not necessarily represent changes as the mind's own doings; the mind must first appropriate changes as its own causal effects through its ideas of ideas. The mind delineates the causal responsibility with which it identifies itself by representing changes in higher-order ideas either as its own doings or as events for which the mind takes no responsibility. The delineation of one's causal responsibility is what Newlands calls the self. As Newlands notes, one can

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take responsibility for anything, but the real causal relations underlie successful self-identifications. Only if the human individual identifies herself with an agent, whose intentions aim to bring about effects that are brought about by the cause that the human individual is identical with, can one live a happy life.[41]

In this chapter, I have argued that higher-order representations constitute consciousness. If we accept Newlands' argument that the higher-order representations constitute the mind's self, which is necessary for achieving happiness, consciousness can play a more constructive role in Spinoza's philosophy than Deleuze would have us believe. Even if consciousness gives rise to explanations by final causes, these explanations can be justified by the underlying efficient causal relations. One might still wonder, however, whether one should not just get away from consciousness and turn directly to mechanical explanations.

If my interpretation of consciousness is correct, the answer is clearly negative. The boundaries of the human mind's cognitive access are the boundaries of the human mind's consciousness. The human mind cannot think of itself, God, and external bodies except through its higher-order ideas constituting its consciousness: it has no cognitive access to reality without them, as it were.

This has quite far-reaching consequences. As Michael Thompson argues, concepts of lifeforms constitute a type of concept, which cannot be applied on the basis of observations, whereas its application is already presupposed by the observational data to be explained. One cannot establish by observation that a dog is a dog, although this must be presupposed when one attempts to explain and appraise its barking.[42] The idea of our self is like the concept of a lifeform in this respect: what we are depends on what we cognize as constituting our agency; yet this cannot be an object of direct observation—it must be presupposed by any explanation or appraisal of our acts. The self is not one among the many contents of consciousness, it is the structure of the mind's consciousness. The mind's higher-order representation of a change *as* the mind's own doing—be that justified by the actual causal relations or not—must be presupposed if the change is to be explained in terms of the mind's essence—be that explanation successful or not—or if the change is to be appraised as prudentially wise or unwise for the human individual—be that appraisal justified or not.

If the lifeform constituting the mind's consciousness is a human lifeform, the self is a human self, and the life of the self is a human life.[43] For this reason, if Spinoza's philosophy is considered as a philosophy for humans, that is, a philosophy that can serve as a practical guide for a human life,[44] it must be a philosophy of

[41] Newlands, "Spinozistic Selves".

[42] Thompson, *Life and Action*; cf. Deleuze, *Spinoza*, p. 130; Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* pp. 21–22.

[43] Renz and Hutchins, "Spinoza on Human and Divine Knowledge"; Toth and Renz, "Die Entstehung von Spinozas Urteilstheorie und ihre Implikationen für seine politische Theorie"; Renz, "Spinoza on the Good Life for Humans".

[44] Renz, "A Metaphysics of Human Life. Towards a New Reading of Spinoza's Philosophy".

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consciousness rather than a philosophy of being. Spinoza's philosophy is a philosophy of consciousness in the sense that it is about people perceiving themselves as causes or agents of their lives, which perception is essentially tied up with the way in which our mental states are represented in higher-order ideas: it is due to these ideas that we conceive of many facets of our lives in terms of *our* actions, which comprehension presupposes rather than confirms the idea of the human self.

7.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have argued for an interpretation of Spinoza's notion of 'consciousness' that can explain what consciousness is for Spinoza, provide a unitary reading of all uses of the term, and account for its role in Spinoza's philosophy. In the first section, I have argued that Spinoza uses the term 'consciousness' to refer to what contemporary analytic philosophers call 'access consciousness', that is, the delineation of those intentional objects that are available for the subject's theoretical or practical inferences. In the second section, I have argued that Spinoza's account of consciousness is based on his theory of 'idea of the idea'. Spinoza uses 'idea of the idea' to refer to a higher-order representation of a first-order idea *as* representing an external body. Consciousness thus describes the way in which the human mind can form thoughts about real or fictional external objects by using its ideas of the affections of its body. In the third section, I argued that consciousness plays a crucial role in Spinoza's philosophy by constituting human experience. The same higher-order ideas determining the mind's cognitive access also determine the self with which the mind identifies itself. If Spinoza's philosophy is written for humans, it must be a philosophy of consciousness: humans can only acquire knowledge and become better by manipulating and improving the content of their consciousness.

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8

Belief as an Essentially Human Attitude

Ursula Renz

On a frequent understanding that is, roughly, a legacy of the German idealists, Spinoza's philosophy constitutes a system that cannot be believed.[1] That was Fichte's way of putting it; more precisely, he claimed that "Spinoza could not have been convinced of his own philosophy".[2] Or, to rehearse Hegel's even more famous assessment, Spinozism is a philosophy that—by conceptualizing infinity as substance—leaves no conceptual space for finite subjectivity.[3]

There is a sense in which these readings look absurd, as—pace Hegel—the *Ethics* was written by a finite human being, Baruch de Spinoza, the existence of whom is not denied; moreover, we may—pace Fichte—assume that Spinoza by-and-large *believed* in the system put forward in the text. And yet, since their first articulation, such readings have been present in Spinoza scholarship, even if, mostly in mitigated versions, and with respect to metaphysical and epistemological issues, they have become mainstream. If a reading deviates from these views and takes finite subjects to play a crucial role in Spinoza's philosophy, it has to defend its approach more fiercely than would be required if it embraced the opposite view. One might regret this, but I prefer to see this as a chance. Given the current situation in Spinoza scholarship, defending a non-idealist reading requires that one shows in detail *how* the finite human perspective is present in Spinoza's system. To show how this perspective is present in Spinoza is important for the interpretation of Spinoza's approach in two ways. First, it provides an understanding of the human

[1] Thanks to several audiences at the University of Graz, the University of Toronto, and the Central European University for their general input; Tim Crane, Katalin Farkas, Dan Garber, Mike Griffith, Yitzhak Melamed, Steven Nadler, Michael Rosenthal, Nick Stang, for their critical questions and comments; Sarah Tropper and Oliver Toth for their perspicuous reviewing, Barnaby Hutchins and Philip Waldner for discussion in connection with previous papers, and the FWF for funding the project *Spinoza and the Human Life-Form*, which offered me many opportunities to think about human life issues in a very inspiriting manner. This research was funded in whole, or in part, by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [doi: 10.55776/P29072]. The finalizing of the paper was made possible through the cluster of excellence *Knowledge in Crisis* COE3, also funded by the FWF.

[2] Fichte, *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre,* p. 94; Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre and Other Writings (1791–1800)*, p. 98. Yitzhak Melamed has recently pointed to this passage; see Melamed, "The Causes of Our Belief in Free Will: Spinoza on Necessary, 'Innate', yet False Cognition".

[3] Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik I. Werke* 5, p. 291.

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condition on which this condition is determined, essentially, by the perspective of humans as finite epistemic subjects. Assuming, second, that this perspective is present in Spinoza's texts, it may fundamentally change our view on what sort of metaphysics he embraces. Whereas it is widely assumed that Spinoza's metaphysics amounts to a merely revisionary view of the world, and how it is to be conceived, the proposed view suggests that there is much descriptive metaphysics contained in Spinoza's approach for which the notion of finite viewpoints is constitutive.[4]

That said, I will not elaborate in this chapter on Spinoza's descriptive metaphysics in detail.[5] Instead, I examine his views on what one could call, in the same spirit, 'the metaphysics of belief'. Thus, my question is this: what is it that constitutes a belief on Spinoza's view? My claim will be that for Spinoza, pace Fichte, belief is an essentially human state of mind. More broadly conceived: belief is a state of mind the actual having of which requires one to be a finite subject.[6] This means that belief is a condition from which God is essentially precluded. More precisely, I will argue that Spinoza takes belief to be a perspectival phenomenon to the effect that beliefs are determined in relation to particular points of view. This can be comprehended in two ways. On the one hand, beliefs are perspectival in that the contents of belief are context-dependent; on the other hand, and more fundamentally, one could also say that it is because the instantiation of belief requires the adoption of a particular viewpoint that belief is a perspectival phenomenon. As I will show, both understandings of viewpoint relativity are present in Spinoza's writings.

I proceed in the following steps. To set the stage, I will briefly rehearse Fichte's objection to Spinoza and sketch what I take to be a question of interest behind his objection (Section 1). The second and main section provides a reconstruction of Spinoza's concept of belief, or rather of what, I think, would be his concept of belief. But as 'belief' does not figure in Spinoza's technical terminology, it is by no means clear where to begin such a reconstruction. This being so, I divide this section into three sub-sections that comprise philological analyses of the terms *opinio*, *iudicium*, and *iudicare*, and a close reading of E2p11, all of which corroborate the view that for Spinoza belief is an essentially human state of mind. I will conclude with a few remarks on the overall picture that follows from my analyses and its implications for a philosophical understanding of politics.

[4] The term 'descriptive metaphysics' has been coined by Peter F. Strawson in his *Individuals*, pp. 9f., where it is used to refer to the analysis of the metaphysical concepts submerged in ordinary language,

[5] But cf. Renz, "A Metaphysics of Human Life. Towards a New Reading of Spinoza's Philosophy", for an exposition of Spinoza's main descriptive metaphysical concepts, and Renz, "Der neue Spinozismus und das Verhältnis von deskriptiver und revisionärer Metaphysik", for a defence of this interpretive perspective in light of a discussion of the opposition between descriptive and revisionary metaphysics.

[6] I use the notion 'finite mind' for a genus of which 'human minds' is a species. These are thus distinct terms, but when it comes to a comparison of finite minds and the infinite mind, the difference may be neglected. Why I consider belief as an essentially *human* state of mind, will become clear later on.

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8.1 From the Problem of Non-Believability to the Metaphysics of Belief

In a recent paper, Yitzhak Melamed has drawn attention to a fascinating passage in Fichte's *Second Introduction* of his *Attempt at a New Exposition of the Wissenschaftslehre*.[7] There, Fichte voices the concern that Spinoza could not have believed his own philosophy, but only thought of it without endorsing it or taking it to be true. In Fichte's words,

> *Spinoza* could not have been convinced of his own philosophy. He could only have *thought* of it; he could not have *believed* it. For this is a philosophy that directly contradicts those convictions that Spinoza must necessarily have adopted in his everyday life, by virtue of which he had to consider himself to be free and self-sufficient [. . .]. He was convinced that a purely objective mode of thinking [*Räsonnement*] must necessarily lead to his system, and he was right about this. But in the course of his thoughts it never occurred to him to reflect upon his own act of thinking; this is where he went astray, and this is how he came to set his speculations in contradiction with his life.[8] (Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre,* p. 98; translation modified)

On Fichte's account, there is an insurmountable gap between the conclusions Spinoza draws in his system and the convictions he must have embraced in his everyday life. Notably, Fichte concedes that the arguments leading to what he takes to be Spinoza's system are conclusive. But they are not sound, he thinks, because they are derived from a problematic, or indeed impossible, point of departure. Hence, Fichte's concern is methodological or metaphysical, not logical in kind: Spinoza's philosophy is unbelievable, not because it is incoherent, but because it rests on assumptions that cannot possibly be embraced by a finite living subject, which is why, on Fichte's account, Spinoza's speculations are in a contradiction with his life.

I am not convinced by Fichte's interpretation of Spinoza's metaphysics.[9] At the bottom of it we find, however, a very interesting question: *How* is it, Fichte

[7] Melamed, "The Causes of Our Belief in Free Will", pp. 122f.

[8] The German reads: "Spinoza konnte nicht überzeugt sein; er konnte seine Philosophie nur denken, nicht sie glauben; denn sie stand in dem direktesten Widerspruch mit seiner notwendigen Überzeugung im Leben, zufolge welcher er sich für frei, und selbständig halten musste. [Er konnte von ihr nur überzeugt sein, inwiefern sie die Wahrheit, inwiefern sie einen Teil der Philosophie als Wissenschaft enthielt.] Dass das bloß objektive Räsonnement auf sein System notwendig führe, davon war er überzeugt; denn darin hatte er recht: im Denken auf sein eigenes Denken zu reflektieren, fiel ihm nicht ein, und darin hatte er unrecht, und dadurch versetzte er seine Spekulation in Widerspruch mit seinem Leben." Fichte, *Versuch einer neuen Darstellung der Wissenschaftslehre*, p. 94.

[9] I have voiced my concerns about Fichte's reading of Spinoza, as well as about Melamed's reading of Fichte in Renz, "Spinozism as a Radical Anti-Nihilism. Spinoza on Being and the Value of Being", pp. 394–400.

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asks, that we come to *embrace* or *endorse*—by contrast to merely *think*—a philosophical view or system? Note that my emphasis is neither on the alleged contradiction between freedom and necessitarianism, nor on the problem of how we can have a theory of a whole of which we ourselves are a part. Instead, I would like to focus on the following point: Fichte assumes a contradiction between the philosopher's claim to have a set of beliefs accounting for the world in general and the trivial fact that it is always from a determinate viewpoint, or from within everyday life, that people adopt the kind of stance we call 'belief' or 'conviction'. Hence, on my understanding, it is not the part–whole relation itself that worries Fichte, but the (seeming) incompatibility between the necessary, always historically defined and, thus, finite determinacy of the origin of any belief on the one hand and the claim to have beliefs about the whole world on the other.

I do not share Fichte's diagnosis of such a contradiction. Of course, we come to our convictions from within our lives and this is true even with regard to the most basic facts about life—but why should this be a problem? I do, however, accept Fichte's conceptual premise that believing, or being convinced, is a state of mind we have only in virtue of being finite living subjects. As I shall point out shortly, I would even go one step further and claim that this is how thought is realized: thought is a feature of reality, because there are particular subjects that have the sort of mental states we refer to as acts of believing.

But there is more to be said about the kind of living beings that are typically believers. All we can say at this point is that, given the mentioned conceptual premise of Fichte's objection, if a subject is to have some belief, it must have come to have it from within its life. Now, to my mind, this is a claim that Spinoza himself would have subscribed to. In the next section, I shall corroborate this interpretive claim in more detail. Before doing so, however, I would like to stick for a moment with the overall character of this claim. As I have already indicated, at the bottom is a metaphysical claim about the possibility of there being belief. In which sense is this a *metaphysical* claim? Its metaphysical nature is certainly not reducible to the assumption that belief is a mental state, by contrast to its being part of the physical realm. Nor is the point that it has an intentional, object-directed structure, however necessary intentionality is for belief. What matters here is the fact that each belief originates from a determinate point of view. Beliefs exist by way of being endorsed by particular subjects located in time and space, or else they cannot exist as beliefs, but only as mere thoughts. But does this not preclude the notion of ideal thoughts—thoughts one would have from the viewpoint of an omniscient, infinite intellect? Following Fichte, it does not, as he allows for thoughts to be derived in a purely objective mode, and rightly so. Still, he does discern this from the convictions we have in life and which he also takes to result in another form of self-reflection, namely, one that

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includes reflection on our own acts of thinking and, thus, on our own stance as living things.[10]

So, we might say that, unless a thought is endorsed by a finite living subject, we cannot talk of its being a belief. Yet, this is a provisional answer at best. The question as to what is needed for a thought to be a belief remains. I now take a closer look at Spinoza's own views in order to elaborate on this problem.

8.2 Opinions, Judgements, and Ideas of Actually Existing Singular Things: Spinoza on the Metaphysics of Belief

In the last section, I argued that behind Fichte's concern is a fundamental philosophical problem: what is required for a thought to be a belief? As a preliminary description of the whole set of conditions to be satisfied, I pointed to the fact that, on Fichte's view, for a thought to be a belief, it must be embraced by a particular finite living subject.

Now, this description of Fichte entails an important prerequisite: given that belief is embraced by a subject, it cannot be captured in terms of Fregean thoughts. A Fregean thought is a proposition or propositionally structured view one may or might endorse; and if nobody actually endorses it, it nevertheless exists, as long as it is the kind of entity someone might endorse, if not today, then perhaps in seven hundred years, or so on. Thus, Fichte's objection already presupposes that for thought to be a belief, it must be more than a merely possible state of mind. I shall elaborate more on what this requires shortly. For now, it suffices to emphasize that, following the guideline of Fichte's objection, the problem of belief is a problem of the instantiation of thought. What needs to be clarified is the issue of what turns merely possible thought into really existing acts of thinking. Our question, in other words, is this: what are the conditions that bring it about that thought is instantiated as belief?

In what follows, I will consult Spinoza's philosophy on this issue. That is, I will analyse his writings in order to address a *philosophical* question. My aim here is therefore *not* to refute Fichte's objection raised against Spinoza's philosophy, namely, that it cannot possibly be believed by a finite living subject. As this objection relies on a particular reading of Spinoza's philosophy, refuting Fichte on this point would be an *interpretive* task. I have tackled this task elsewhere.[11] Here, instead, my question is: what do Spinoza's writings reveal about the conditions of the instantiation of thought in the form of beliefs?

As we shall see, Spinoza has a bunch of interesting things to say about it. But it is by no means clear how this reconstruction is supposed to get off the ground,

[10] See again the quote given earlier from Fichte, *Introductions to the Wissenschaftslehre,* p. 98.
[11] Renz, "Spinozism as a Radical Anti-Nihilism", pp. 394–400.

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although the first question looks simple enough: what is belief, on Spinoza's account? Unfortunately, it is not at all obvious what of Spinoza's own terminology, technical or non-technical, we can rely on here. Note that this difficulty does not only arise because there is, strictly speaking, no Latin equivalent to the English 'belief' or the German *Überzeugung*, but it is largely due to the somewhat striking fact that Spinoza's technical terms *idea* or *modus cogitandi* do not, by themselves, specify whether they are about what we would identify as Fregean thoughts or Fichtean beliefs, in which case much extrapolation would be needed to vindicate a concept of belief in Spinoza's usage of these terms. Not surprisingly, there is a controversy as to whether all ideas are or involve belief,[12] whether there is room for distinction so that only some ideas are beliefs,[13] or whether it must altogether be denied that Spinoza has a concept of belief.[14]

This shows that, if these technical terms were all we had to hook onto in Spinoza, Fichte could be seen as making a valid point. Luckily, however, there are other, less technically defined terms, that are worthwhile considering, namely, *iudicium* and *opinio*. In the remainder of this section, I will therefore examine Spinoza's usage of these terms, before further arguing, by way of a close reading of E2p11, that Spinoza has a specific view on what it means and requires for a mind to actually have ideas in a way that qualifies them for being instantiated as beliefs.

8.2.1 opinio

The Latin expression that comes perhaps closest to the English 'belief', or Fichte's *Überzeugung*, is *opinio*. This term shows up fewer than a dozen times in the *Ethics*; in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, it is not even mentioned once; but it is frequently employed in the *Theological-Political Treatise*.[15]

Let us begin our analysis by looking at Spinoza's usage of this term in the TTP. There, Spinoza uses this terminology generally for people's worldviews or for some particular content of those views. More specifically, *opinio* is invoked to refer to religious worldviews (G3:7–8); and in contrast to *fides* or *pietas*, which are used to talk about religion as a practical attitude, *opinio* is used to discuss theoretical or pre-theoretical views that religious people adhere to. In this vein, Spinoza writes that the vulgar have 'opiniones de Deo' (G 3:37–38) and the same word is also

[12] Della Rocca "The Power of an Idea: Spinoza's Critique of Pure Will", Steinberg, "Belief, Affirmation, and the Doctrine of Conatus in Spinoza", Lenz, "Ideas as Thick Beliefs".

[13] Steinberg, "Two Puzzles Concerning Spinoza's Conception of Belief", but see also Steinberg, "The Affirmative Mind: Spinoza on Striving under the Attribute of Thought", where he tends to a more general tenet by claiming that "for Spinoza, all mental states or entities [. . .] are ideas and all ideas take and affirm an object" (pp. 13–14). A view that allows for qualification has been defended by Oliver Toth in his unpublished dissertation.

[14] Lin, "Affirmation, Judgment, and Epistemic Theodicy in Descartes and Spinoza", pp. 41–42.

[15] Giancotti Boscherini, *Lexicon Spinozanum*, pp. 784–786.

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used for Moses' thoughts (G 3:38). But Spinoza further indicates that *opiniones* as such involve neither *pietas* nor *impietas* (G 3:172). This point, which is explicitly expressed towards the end of Chapter 13, is revealing with respect to his concept of religion and its being distinct from theology. More significant for our present concern, though, is that it is key for Spinoza's political views, as it underpins his claim voiced in Chapter 17 that it is dangerous "to make purely speculative things a matter of divine right and to make laws concerning opinions", because, he continues, "that government which makes it a crime to hold opinions [. . .] is the most violent of all" (C 2:327/G 3:225). Although, in the subsequent chapter, Spinoza demands that "the right concerning sacred matters belongs completely to the supreme power" (C 2:332/G 3:228), he here contends that any prohibition of religious opinions by the government would amount to a violent attempt to oppress people's inalienable freedom of thought.

Another feature of Spinoza's usage of this terminology is worthwhile mentioning: in the TTP, *opiniones* are often depicted as relative to a viewpoint, and this viewpoint is often, but not necessarily, ethnically determined. Peoples adhere to this or that *opinio*, Spinoza writes, for example, in the preface (G 3:8); and in a similar way he later speaks of the 'opiniones Judaeorum' (G 3:54), the opinions of the Jews, or the contrary opinions of different sects (G 3:173). Likewise, he says that the contents of prophecies vary, not only in relation to the prophets' tempers and imaginations, but also in relation to their *opiniones* (G 3:30). He thus assumes that opinions are views the believing of which is naturally divided according to different groups.

Concluding from these observations on Spinoza's usage of *opinio* in the TTP, we can underline two points. First, Spinoza apparently uses the term *opinio* in a relativistic fashion, so that what is believed, when someone has an opinion, is determined by his or her particular viewpoint. Second, when talking about *opiniones* in the TTP, Spinoza adopts the stance of a cultural anthropologist; that is, he is interested in the anthropological phenomenon of people's developing opinions and, by implication, the diversity of their *opiniones*.

These two features are also present in the *Ethics*. There, too, the term *opinio* is used to refer to some view that Spinoza himself does not hold; accordingly, he does not call any of his own views *opinio*. Moreover, it is obvious that *opiniones* are considered as context-bound, perspectival items. However, while, in the TTP, these features are present by way of Spinoza's pre-theoretical usage of the term, in the *Ethics* they are also present in his epistemology, where the term *opinio* shows up in connection with his famous classification of the three genera of knowledge. Concretely, *opiniones* are here described as doxastic mental states that stem from the senses and are transmitted by signs.[16] It would go beyond the scope of this

[16] E2p40s2.

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chapter to discuss what this entails theoretically,[17] although it is clear, on the face of it, that the term *opinio* is used in this classification to denote some view[18] that is neither derived by rational inference nor grounded in intuitive insight, and that Spinoza also does not endorse himself. Hence, to conclude our analysis, we can say that in both the *Ethics* and the TTP, the term *opinio* serves to refer to some particular view endorsed by someone, although not by Spinoza himself.

8.2.2 iudicium

Another term that is important for the present concern and more likely denotes one of Spinoza's substantial philosophical concepts is *iudicium* (judgement).[19] As is well known, the concept of judgement plays a crucial role in the TTP, where the possibility to transfer one's judgement to the state or the sovereign is explicitly denied. This suggests that, to the extent to which this claim relies on Spinoza's theory of judgement, his theory is connected with his views on politics.[20] In Chapter 20 of the TTP, however, where the mentioned denial is voiced, *iudicium* does not refer to particular belief states, but to the capacity of subjects to form judgements and, thus, to have beliefs. Still, this denial entails an important point regarding Spinoza's views on the metaphysics of belief: given that judgement (considered as a capacity to form judgements or to have beliefs) cannot possibly be transferred from one subject to another, we can assume that any mental state resulting from this activity depends, too, on the activity of some individual finite subject. Thus, for Spinoza, as for Fichte, the instantiation of thought in the form of belief is a matter of a finite subject's actually judging something to be the case, and this actual judging (or act of judgement)—so Spinoza's metaphysical point behind his political theory—cannot possibly be transferred.

The question arises as to how this point about the metaphysics of belief is present in Spinoza's theory of judgement. The TTP provides no answer to this question; hence, I will consult the *Ethics* instead. Before I do so, notice that—just like *opinio*—the word *iudicium* is almost absent from Spinoza's early works.[21] But unlike in the case of *opinio*, the young Spinoza had a couple of things to say about the process of judging, as is obvious from his discussion of the Cartesian doctrine

[17] See Vinciguerra, *Spinoza et le signe. La genèse de l'imagination,* for an analysis of Spinoza on signs, and Renz, "Spinozist Cognitive Psychology: Spinoza's Concept of the Imagination", and Renz, "Spinoza's Epistemology", pp. 158–162, for his concept of the imagination.

[18] See for this also E4p17s; E3daXXVIII, and E4p57s.

[19] I rely here on a paper I have co-authored with Oliver Toth, see Toth and Renz, "Die Entstehung von Spinozas Urteilstheorie und ihre Implikationen für seine politische Philosophie". Thanks to Oliver for very inspiring discussions.

[20] Toth and Renz, "Die Entstehung von Spinozas Urteilstheorie", pp. 642–643.

[21] If I correctly understand the Dutch *oordeel* as equivalent with the German *Urteil*, there is one singular exemption in the *Short Treatise*, G 1:95. As this usage does not undermine my claims, I leave it aside here.

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of judgement entailed in *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy* and the *Appendix Containing Metaphysical Thoughts*. There, however, he does not always express his own views, and it is also questionable to what extent his views underwent significant changes after the publication of those texts.[22] In what follows, I therefore restrict myself to the *Ethics*.

The most explicit employment of this term can be found in the passage from E2p48 to E2p49s, where Spinoza is engaged in a critical discussion of Descartes' theory of judgement. As is well known, Spinoza's view departs from Descartes' in denying that the endorsement or affirmation constituting the act of judgement is a separate act of will; instead, Spinoza considers this endorsement as an intellectual and inseparable act that inheres in any singular idea. Thus, unlike in the case of Fregean thoughts, which denote contents for possible judgement, Spinoza's understanding is that all ideas—simply by representing a particular thing as such-and-such—already involve the act of assenting to the thing's being such-and-such.

As becomes clear in Spinoza's further discussion, this is not to preclude that we have images of things or can muse about the nature of things. It is not that these options exist as a result of suspending our judgement and not assenting to what is represented to us. Rather, what happens is that we add the notion of non-existence to a given idea, or, what amounts to the same, subtract from its representational content that item by which we are brought to endorse it. Hence, what is usually described in terms of a suspension of judgement, is the result of an unconscious or guided manipulation of content to the effect that we deny the necessity of the object's being such-and-such. In Spinoza's terms: "[s]uspension of judgment [. . .] is really [a] perception and not [an act of] free will", to the effect that the act of endorsement consists in a denial of the necessity of the object's being such-and-such, but this is not of an act of will (C 1:488/G 2:134). This is in turn also revealing with respect to the metaphysical question of what is required for thought to be instantiated: taking Spinoza's views about the act of judging expressed in E2p49s seriously, there simply is no singular thought—and, thus, no thought at all—unless there are singular acts of judgement. For thought to be instantiated, therefore, requires an act of judging, or as I shall say, of belief.

Yet, there are other uses of the term *iudicium* in the *Ethics* that are no less important for our concerns here. In E1app, having mentioned a couple of views of other philosophers that he finds questionable, Spinoza quotes the proverbs "[s]o many heads, so many attitudes", "[e]veryone finds his judgment more than enough", and "[t]here are as many differences of brains as of palates", and he takes these proverbs to indicate that "[. . .] men judge things according to the disposition

[22] See Toth and Renz, "Die Entstehung von Spinozas Urteilstheorie", pp. 236–241 for the development of Spinoza's conception of judgement.

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of their brain, and imagine, rather than understand them (C 1:445).[23] In a different context, but with a similar spirit, he writes in E3p51s,

> [. . .] because each one judges from his own affect what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse (see E3p9s) it follows that men can vary as much in judgment as in affect. (C 1:522)[24]

It is far from clear how these quotations are reconcilable with the concept of judgement put forward in the passage following proposition E2p48. Unlike in the above-quoted, non-technical usages of the terms *iudicare*, where Spinoza stresses that one's judgements are the results of some drive or preference, in E2p49s, the act of judgement is assumed to be an intellectual act.

One might therefore raise the question as to whether Spinoza's view is that we judge things to be such-and-such because we comprehend them, or rather, that we comprehend them as we are disposed to see them.[25] It would go beyond the scope of this chapter to address this question at length here.[26] But let me just quote yet another piece of text, where the verb *iudicare* is employed in a manner that indicates why the mentioned tensions do not really exist for Spinoza.

In E4p26, we read,

> Whatever we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding; nor does the mind, insofar as it uses reason, judge anything else useful to itself except what leads to understanding. (C 1:559)[27]

Just as in E2p49s, Spinoza here describes the act of judgement as an intellectual act. In the demonstration to this proposition, however, just as in E3p51s, he invokes E3p9s, where it is argued that each subject is determined to do what its appetite presents as promoting its preservation. This shows that Spinoza sees no gap between his intellectualist conception of the act of judgement (as established in his epistemology of Part Two) and the seemingly voluntarist claim that in judging we are determined by the affective state of our nature (which assumption he first voices in E1app and then elaborates in his theory of the affects of Part Three). In both passages, Spinoza's point is that judging is not a spontaneous act that people

[23] The Latin reads: "homines pro dispositione cerebri de rebus judicare resque potius imaginary quam intelligere" (G 2:83).

[24] "quia unusquisque ex suo affectu iudiciat, quid bonum, quid malum, quid melius et quid pejus sit (vide schol. prop. 39, hujus), sequitur homines tam judicio quam affect variare posse" (G 2:178–179).

[25] See also Steinberg, "The Affirmative Mind", pp. 3–6, for an exposition of this problem.

[26] See Della Rocca, "The Power of an Idea", and Lenz, "Ideas as Thick Beliefs", for accounts of this issue; Lin, "Affirmation, Judgment, and Epistemic Theodicy", for a critique of Della Rocca; and Steinberg, "The Affirmative Mind", for an attempt at overcoming the problem on a general level.

[27] In Latin: "Quicquid es ratione conamur, nihil aliud est quam intelligere; nec mens, quatenus ratione utitur, aliud sibi utile esse judicat nisi id, quod ad intelligendum conducit" (G 2:227).

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do out of the blue—or from a supposed power—to decide whether one wants to endorse some view. Instead, judging consists in the endorsement of precisely those contents represented in a singular idea, where it is a matter of the particular nature of the judging subject how things are represented in his mind.

This shows that a judgement can be both: it is the act of endorsement entailed in the idea representing something as such-and-such, but at the same time this act is a necessary result of the mental disposition of the judging subject. Insofar, for example, as we perceive cooperation as good for us, we judge in virtue of having the idea of cooperation as good for us, but this does by no means preclude that this idea of cooperation as good for us is the effect of a previous experience where cooperation turned out to be good for us. There is no inconsistency in Spinoza's account, but simply two sides of the same coin—or two sorts of answers to two different sorts of problem provided by one and the same theory of judgement. Inconsistency does not even arise, where different answers can be given to one of these problems, as the disposition to see cooperation as good may be the effect of some process of reasoning in one individual's mental disposition, while in another it is brought about by the idiosyncrasies of that individual's imaginary narratives.

What does all this show about Spinoza's metaphysics of belief? Evidently, it corroborates what we have observed with respect to Spinoza's denial of the possibility of transferring one's judgement to others: judging is an act that each mind commits individually, since—as we have now learnt—what each mind judges as true is a function of its particular constitution. This does not preclude that some judgement may be rationally grounded, in which case Spinoza would expect us to agree on this particular matter. Nor does it, more generally speaking, preclude that—in terms of content—individuals may share their views with certain, but not all, other individuals. Far from it, that such concurrence does happen seems quite likely given the social character of many imaginative narratives or *opiniones*.

This is eventually where the terms *opinio* and *iudicium* come together: both suggest that beliefs are context-bound and perspectival states. As such, they are attributable only to finite subjects. Yet, unlike in the case of *opinio*, Spinoza's usage of the term *iudicium* also indicates how these features are conceptualized within his theory of the human mind, to the effect that each state's context-relativity and perspectivity can be considered as a function of the particular constitution of the judging mind. And this is why, despite the public nature of the contents of our ideas, endorsing one of them is an act I always do myself.

Taking these observations about Spinoza's usage of the terms *opinio* and *iudicium* or *iudicare* together, we can attribute to him the view that beliefs are necessarily the states of finite subjects. Under the assumption that a certain use of signs is peculiar to humans,[28] and that the use of signs is constitutive for opinions

[28] How the usage of signs or rather of material items as signs is a specifically human activity is a point Ernst Cassirer discusses at length in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*.

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for Spinoza, we could even surmise that Spinoza's epistemology of beliefs commits him to the view that beliefs are essentially human states from which not only God, but also non-human animals are precluded. But this is a rather speculative step. In any case, given the previous analysis, Spinoza would agree with the notion that beliefs are the states of finite living subjects that are bound to particular perspectives.

8.2.3 Ideas of Actually Existing Singular Things

In the beginning of this section, I pointed out that Spinoza's proper technical terms *idea* or *modus cogitandi* do not specify, by themselves, whether they are equivalent to Fregean thought or to Fichtean beliefs for which actual endorsement is essential. Still, there is one particular use of this technical terminology that is relevant for the present concern, namely, the phrase by which Spinoza refers to those ideas that we have or may have of some actually existing particular, *idea rei singularis actu existentis* in Latin. Put as such, this phrase looks trivial, but on a closer inspection of the way it is employed in the passages from E2p8 to E2p13, where Spinoza derives his concept of the human mind, we can surmise that it has an important part to play.

Consider, for example, its mention in E2p11 and its demonstration.[29] In this proposition, Spinoza elaborates on the notion of the human mind's actual being, and in doing so, he shows what distinguishes people's way of having or endorsing some idea in the form of belief from God's way of comprising them as mere thoughts. As I shall show, despite many traditional readings, Spinoza restricts the possibility of having ideas in the manner of beliefs to finite minds.[30]

Let us now take a closer look at the text. E2p11 says:

> The first thing which constitutes the actual being of a human mind is nothing but an idea of some [*alicuius*] singular thing that actually exists. (C 1:456; translation modified)

Or in Latin:

> Primum, quod actuale mentis humanae esse constituit, nihil aliud est quam idea rei alicujus singularis actu existentis. (G 2:94)

[29] I have been working on this proposition for more than 20 years now and have defended a non-standard reading in several places, see in particular Renz, *The Explainability of Experience. Realism and Subjectivity in Spinoza's Theory of the Human Mind*, pp. 145–156. But it was only in the last few years, due to the project on *Spinoza and the Concept of the Human Life-Form* funded by the Austrian Science Foundation, of which this volume is part, that I developed my interpretation of it in a direction that made me realize its manifold relevance for a philosophical account of the problem of the human lifeform.

[30] I here rely on a paper I have recently co-authored within this project with Barnaby Hutchins, see Renz and Hutchins, "Spinoza on Human and Divine Knowledge". Many thanks to Barnaby for very inspiring discussions.

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This proposition marks the beginning of Spinoza's discussion of the concept of the mind. It brings up a crucial condition concerning the actual being of any human mind: for a human mind to actually exist, there must be some idea of some actually existing thing. The crucial question is, of course, what idea Spinoza has in mind here.

Traditionally, interpreters tended to read this proposition as claiming that the 'actual being of a human mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing that actually exists'. As a consequence, they were inclined to assume that Spinoza is talking about a *particular determinate* idea, namely, the idea of the body of that subject whose mind's actual being E2p11 is under discussion. On this more-or-less standard reading, the mind's actual being is just the idea parallel to the body under the attribute of thought, and Spinoza simply anticipates here what he claims explicitly later, in E2p13, namely, that the object of the idea constituting the mind of a particular person is the body of that particular person.

I would not deny that in E2p13 Spinoza claims that each individual's mind is constituted by a representation of what happens to 'our body' and that, thus, there is a sense in which the mind is just the idea of the body. However, this is only established in E2p13, and even more importantly for the present concern: this is not what E2p11 says. Not only is there no mention at all of parallelism in either E2p11 or its demonstration; there is also no explicit indication that the object of the idea constituting the actual being of the mind is the body parallel to the mind in question. On the contrary, note that E2p11 reads *res aliqua singularis* in Latin, which means 'some' or even 'any' thing, rather than 'this determinate thing'. In particular, the proposition does not employ the pronoun *quaedam*, which is used in E2ax4 to refer to the human body. We—and I explicitly include here Barnaby Hutchins along with myself—therefore suggested taking the Latin wording of E2p11 seriously.[31] On our reading, Spinoza's claim in E2p11 is that the human mind is conditioned by the existence of *any* idea of *any* actually existing thing in that mind's thought, and not, as the standard reading assumes, by the existence of the human body being the parallel to the human mind. If this is right, then it is not parallelism that does the argumentative work here and, no less importantly, it is not yet the individuation of minds that is at stake here. Instead, the issue Spinoza addresses here is this: what makes the kind of thought we consider as human thought a case of actual thought? What, in other words, is it that allows for thought to be instantiated in the form of a mental state of a subject?

A further point needs to be emphasized. In addressing this issue, Spinoza seems to rely on an implicit semantic consideration. This means that E2p11 does not deal with the psychology of human thought, but is instead concerned with the meaning or meaningfulness of the *concept* of a human mind, and thus operates on

[31] Renz and Hutchins, "Knowledge for Humans", pp. 254–255.

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a semantic level. On this reading, Spinoza's claim is this: What we *say*, when attributing actual being to a mind, is that someone has ideas of the things around her, be those things flowers, apples, donkeys, or llamas.

How does this all relate to the metaphysics of belief? We can assume that in talking about the ideas of actually existing singular things, Spinoza is *de re* talking about beliefs. This is not to say that reflection on belief is Spinoza's main concern here, but that all he says here about the ideas of particular things applies, by implication, to his views on beliefs as well. But what allows us to assume this, and what precisely does it show about his concept of belief?

On a frequent view already mentioned,[32] Spinoza assumes that all ideas are or involve belief, insofar as the endorsement of its representational content is a constitutive part of the idea. Recall, moreover, that when I put aside the notion that *ideae* may serve as a natural point of departure for a reconstruction of Spinoza's views on beliefs, I said that the usage of the term *idea* does not by itself specify whether the term is about Fregean thoughts or Fichtean beliefs. This was not to deny the notion that endorsement is a constitutive part of all ideas, but to question whether all ideas are actually endorsed or whether, alternatively, they are merely, as is the case with Fregean thoughts, the kind of mental entities that qualify as candidates for being endorsed, when a subject forms or has a belief. So, there is, I supposed, room for drawing a distinction between ideas as endorsable and ideas as actually endorsed views on things.

Now my assumption is that while the general concept of 'ideas' as used in Spinoza's work entails a certain vagueness with respect to this issue, his talk of ideas of actually existing singular things first introduced in E2p11 is *not vague*, and suggests actual endorsement. This is why I assume that Spinoza is *de re* talking about belief here, and that these ideas are Fichtean and not merely Fregean thoughts.

This is also corroborated by considering how the phrase 'idea rei alicujus singularis actu existentis' is used to introduce the notion of the human mind in E2p11, or rather the assumption of there being such a thing as a human mind. As said, if we take the article *alicujus* seriously, we cannot assume that Spinoza relies on parallelism here. Instead, what is at stake is, I claim, something along the following lines: it seems to be a condition of any meaningful attribution of an idea of an actually existing singular thing to a subject that it could also lack this idea. This is again a meta-linguistic point concerning the usage of the concept of human thought: to say of someone that she has an idea of a particular thing is meaningful talk only if we mean to say that she has *this* idea (meaning: of *this* particular thing and as represented in *this* particular term), but not *that* idea (meaning: of *that* other particular thing or as represented in *that* other term)—or that *she* has this idea, while *someone else* does not. In other words, the meaningfulness of the

[32] Della Rocca, "The Power of an Idea", Steinberg, "The Affirmative Mind", and Lenz, "Ideas as Thick Beliefs".

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assumption of someone's having the idea of some *x*—and, by implication, also her being or having a mind—is conditioned on the possibility of her not having the idea of *x*. And this entails a further point. To say of someone that she has an idea of a particular thing in the way just spelt out is meaningful only if—in addition to our saying that she has *this* idea, but not *that* idea—we also wish to say that *she* has this idea, while *someone else* does not. In other words, that someone's having the idea of some *x* is conditioned on the possibility of *her* not having the idea of *x*.

What does this all show about Spinoza's views on belief? Taking it all together and assuming Spinoza is *de re* talking about beliefs here, we can attribute the view to him that beliefs are mental states we have in virtue of our having *determinate* ideas. And this is no abstract claim, but it relates to the very activity of believing: believing is no matter of something's being determinable in God's intellect, but of a human mind's being actual by its actually determining a particular object in virtue of an endorsement of some idea representing its object as actually existing or obtaining. In order to believe something, we must therefore individuate the object of our belief, and when we do so to we do not merely pick it out, but represent it in such a manner that assent to the notion of its existence is already provided by this act of individuating. Let me conclude by emphasizing that this result of our consideration of the technical terminology of the *Ethics* fits quite nicely with the picture established in the previous sub-sections by the analysis of Spinoza's usage of the terms *opinio* and *iudicium*. If we take E2p11 to establish a semantic condition of the notion of the mind's being actual and its having views about the actual existence (or obtainment) of things, and if we take this to frame Spinoza's views on belief, then more is required than an idea in an infinite intellect for there to be a belief. This is so, on Spinoza's account, because God's ideas are not beliefs, but merely Fregean thoughts which are not intrinsically instantiated as actual beliefs. It takes finite believers to make beliefs.

8.3 Spinozist Metaphysics of Belief as a Conceptual Ground of the Usage of the Term in His Anthropology and Politics

In this chapter, I have argued that for Spinoza, pace Fichte, belief is an essentially human state of mind, or a state that is only available to finite subjects. It is, in other words, a condition from which God is by definition precluded. A crucial step consisted in showing, by way of elaborating Spinoza's uses of certain notions, that beliefs are considered as perspectival phenomena which are established from and determined in relation to particular viewpoints.

In the introduction, I have discerned two senses in which perspectivity can be seen as essential. On the one hand, belief can be perspectival in the sense that the contents of any belief are context-dependent; on the other hand, they are also perspectival because instantiation of belief requires the adoption of a particular

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viewpoint. We have seen that both understandings of perspective-relativity are present in Spinoza's writings: he obviously takes *opiniones* to be perspectival in the first sense, whereas his claim regarding the finite nature of the subjects of judgement relates to the second sense of perspectivity. To make this distinction clear, one could say that, on Spinoza's account, beliefs are both 'content-perspectival' and 'constitution-perspectival' entities. Not only is it a matter of perspective what they are about, but they are perspectival in the sense that any instantiation of thought in terms of belief requires finite believers. Following Spinoza's theory of judgement, there are no individualized ideas that are not by the same token beliefs, and, following another aspect of the same theory, these beliefs are always the results of the mental dispositions of those having them.

Interestingly, the analysis of Spinoza's views on the human mind's actual being brought to the fore that the features of content-perspectivity and of constitution-perspectivity are conceptually interrelated in the metaphysics of belief. If actuality of thought requires an application of basic semantic distinctions, then constitution-perspectivity holds because of content-perspectivity, and vice versa: it is *because* any actualization of thought displays semantic divisions which only allow for the individuation of objects that belief is constitutively bound to perspective. And it is *because* any thought requires actualization in an individual mind that the existence of semantic divisions is a prerequisite of the meaningfulness of the notion of the mind's having a thought. Consequently, it seems that content- and constitution-perspectivity are just two sides of one and the same coin, namely, the assumption that thought is always instantiated in the form of particular views held by particular subjects.

This may sound surprising in a Spinozistic framework. But it sounds far from strange in our descriptive metaphysics. Let us just stick, for a moment, with doxastic states. (That is, let us abstract from the obvious fact that our daily phenomenology comprises a rich spectrum of mental states, in which case the mental is instantiated in manifold ways in our mental life.) Then, the account I attribute to Spinoza seems to result in the assumption underlying our talk about thought that any instantiation of thought depends on its being attributable to someone, be that me, you, or past living beings such as Aristotle or Margaret Cavendish. To be sure, there are philosophers—from Plato to Rudolph Hermann Lotze or Gottlob Frege and beyond—who assume that thoughts exist, as it were, without there being people believing them. But it is, I think, not an uncharitable interpretation of the notion of Platonic ideas if we take them to describe idealizations. In this case, they are still voiced by finite subjects using words or mathematical notations, and they must, moreover, be articulable as thoughts to be endorsed or denied. So, while the notion that thought needs to be expressed, as a person's belief is essential for ruling out certain readings of Platonism (on which, thought could exist in the absence of people), it does not preclude subtler understandings. By implication, attributing this view to Spinoza makes it somewhat difficult to talk of God's having certain

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ideas simply, but it does not rule out all readings of the notion of God's intellect comprising them.[33]

Where does this leave us philosophically? Perhaps, the metaphysical assumption that thought is instantiated as beliefs that are essentially the states of finite subjects is not very insightful as such. This may be one of the reasons why alternative and revisionary pictures of thoughts, as we find them in the standard readings of Spinozism, are attractive to many. Perhaps, though, the philosophical relevance of the assumed view on the metaphysics of beliefs becomes apparent when we consider it within a larger anthropological and political context. I can only give a very brief outline of this here.

Note that the conception of belief discussed in Section 8.2 is a key concept of that part of Spinoza's philosophy I would refer to as his 'naturalist cultural anthropology', or of his views on how the human lifeform both frames and is shaped by people's cultural activities. It is naturalist in assuming that the human lifeform frames people's cultural activities, and it is culturalist in assuming that cultural activities may in turn shape the ways in which the human lifeform is embodied in the sets of practices developed within a community. I take it that Spinoza has a firm grasp of both the naturalist framing and the cultural shaping of our lives, and that he approaches it in such a way that no nature-vs-nurture debate arises.

The concept of belief figures as a key concept for Spinoza's naturalist, cultural anthropology, on three different levels. On a *general* or plainly *philosophical* level, Spinoza assumes that, being a *capacity* to maintain certain views, belief shapes the mental life of humans to the extent that it is constitutive for their being human subjects. We cannot transfer our judgement to the sovereign without losing our humanity, Spinoza says in the TTP. On a *cultural-theorical* level, we may discern *specific practices* of how people come to have beliefs; these are the practices that shape human social life. Such practices are invoked in several places of the TTP, for example in the chapter about prophecy and miracles. Prophecy and narratives of miracles are practices to establish beliefs. They do so in a, normatively speaking, problematic manner, but understanding how they do so provides us with a better grasp of how practices govern people by invoking particular beliefs in them. Another and a, normatively speaking, less problematic practice is introduced by Spinoza in the *Ethics* in his doctrine of the common notions, which entails a view about how to develop concepts scientifically. The third level, finally, consists in empirical inquiries into particular *sets of beliefs* shared by particular groups of people constituting communities. Let us call this the level of *history* or *cultural anthropology*. Perhaps somewhat strikingly, this level is also present in Spinoza's writings, in particular in the TTP. Here, too, belief is a key concept, as is obvious from his usage of *opinio*: by attributing opinions to certain ethnically defined groups,

[33] For a reading of God's intellect as an ideal term, see Renz and Hutchins, "Knowledge for Humans", pp. 260–261.

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Spinoza apparently operates on the third level. It is fascinating to see how these three levels come together in Spinoza. There seem to be tensions, but, on a closer look, they disappear. Spinoza has a multifaceted, but by no means incoherent view about the human lifeform and the contribution of belief in shaping it on different levels.

Why does this matter philosophically (in opposition to its being merely identifiable in an exegesis of Spinoza's writings)?

It is worthwhile mentioning that in establishing the naturalist cultural anthropology of the TTP, Spinoza sought to intervene in the actual political situation of the Netherlands. It is in connection with this aim that the terms *opinio* and *iudicium* get systematically used in the TTP. Taking this at face value, we can say that belief matters, politically, and it matters because belief is a constitutive force in the concrete shaping of our lives. Given its metaphysics, however, this is an irreducible, unsurmountable feature of human life: if beliefs are essentially perspectival states, and if thought is necessarily instantiated in the form of belief, we cannot but have beliefs.

On Spinoza's view, it is not just that there is no thought without belief; this also means that there is no human existence without belief nor, by implication, without groups having particular and to some extent false beliefs. In a nutshell, there is no human existence without political conflict over beliefs.

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PART IV
THE HUMAN BODY

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9

Axiom Four of Part Two of the *Ethics* Deserves Paparazzi

Noa Shein

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Introduction

The fourth axiom of Part Two of the *Ethics*, which states "*Nos corpus quoddam multis modis affici sentimus*"[1] (G 2:86) does not enjoy the same celebrity status among scholars as other axioms or propositions do, and it receives little to no special attention. This might be due, in part, to the paucity of direct references to it later on in the *Ethics*.[2] This, in turn, might have signalled to commentators that "there is no there there" as Gertrude Stein said of Oakland (much to my Oakland-raised grandmother's chagrin). In what follows, I will challenge this attitude towards this axiom and offer reasons why it should be regarded as central to Spinoza's project. I will do so by highlighting some ways in which this axiom expresses as well as informs several of Spinoza's core metaphysical doctrines. For this purpose, I will (in Section 1) begin by discussing the axiomatic nature of E2a2: "Man thinks"[3] and E2a4, and then point to an important difference between these two axioms and their placement in Part Two. Having articulated some important features of E2a4 I will (in Section 2) call attention to the connection between "sensing our body affected by other bodies" and Proposition 28 of Part One, which articulates the nature of the causal relations among finite modes:

> Every singular thing, or any thing which is finite and has a determinate existence, can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to

[1] There is a question as to how to translate this axiom in light of the ambiguity of the term "modus" and the lack of prepositions in Latin. Two defensible translations are "We sense our body affected in many ways" or "we sense our body affected by many modes". See n. 7 for the distinction between and equivalence of "by many modes" and "in many ways" as used in this axiom. For comparison, see Curley's translation, "We feel a certain body affected in many ways". For the moment, however, I would like to keep to the Latin, noting the possible ambiguities in the English without arguing for any one translation over another.

[2] The only place where E2a4 is referenced directly is E2p13dem.

[3] In the Dutch translation there is an addendum which reads "or to put it differently, we know that we think". See Curley's footnote regarding the addition in the Dutch translation and the claim that it was added by some of Spinoza's disciples (C 1:48).

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> exist and produce an effect by another cause, which is also finite and has a determinate existence; and again, this cause also can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another, which is also finite and has a determinate existence, and so on, to infinity. (C 1:432/G 2:69)

In this context, my main point will be to note that what is experientially immediate to us, namely, sensing our body affected, has as its ontological underpinnings the co-determination of finite modes expressed in E1p28. Based on the experientially immediate sensation of being determined, I draw (in Section 3) attention to the fact that this determination requires activity. That is, in order to be determined by other bodies, we cannot be completely inactive, since our very determination presupposes our own activity. I take this to be expressed by the *conatus* doctrine stated in E3p6: "The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing" (C 3:499/G 2:146). In this section, I will again make explicit in what sense our own activity is given in experience. I will then (in Section 4) call attention to the connection between E2p13, which states, "[t]he object of the idea constituting the human mind is the body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else" (C 2:457/G 2:96) and E2a4. Notably, this is the only proposition which alludes directly to E2a4. In this context, I will suggest that E2a4 already encapsulates the intentional relation between ideas and bodies. The final proposition that I will suggest (in Section 5) is illuminated by taking E2a4 seriously is proposition 2 of Part Two: "Extension is an attribute of God, or God is an extended thing" (C 2:449/G 2:86). In particular I will try to shed (much needed) light on the demonstration of this proposition which by itself is prima facie less than helpful (to put it mildly). My main aim in this chapter is to present these various connections and offer their cumulative effect as, at the very least, suggestive of the central and underappreciated role this axiom plays in Spinoza's metaphysics and epistemology.

9.1 Axioms 2 and 4 of Part Two of the *Ethics*

Perhaps the first two most obvious things to note about E2a4 are that it is an axiom, and that it appears in Part Two of the *Ethics*. While it might not be immediately clear why Spinoza takes certain things as axiomatic, and why he places them in the order he does,[4] a remark in the scholium to E1p8 proves illuminating: "[b]ut if men would attend to the nature of substance, they would have no doubt at all of the truth of P7. Indeed, this proposition would be an axiom for everyone, and would

[4] See, for example, his use of the term "essence" in the definition of attribute in Part One, while he provides a definition of "essence" only in Part Two (E2def2).

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be numbered among the common notions" (C 1:413/G 2:50). This remark makes several things apparent. First: axioms are self-evidently true. That is, axioms are such claims about which we can have "no doubt at all" as to their truth. Second, and no less important, is Spinoza's claim that what he presented as a proposition in E1p7—namely, that every substance necessarily exists—and demonstrated by alluding to E1p6c and E1def1, could have been an axiom. There is something very surprising and revealing about this comment. One might have, erroneously, thought that what Spinoza takes as axiomatic has some ontological priority, and that it is not possible to simply pick and choose what the most basic (ontological) elements are. This comment, though, makes it clear that this is not the case. Spinoza is admitting here that he took certain things rather than others to be axioms, not because they express that which has ontological priority, but rather because they are more readily available to the reader, even if the reader might be highly confused about the true ontological structure of the world. More specifically regarding E1p7, Spinoza is suggesting that, were we not confused in the way we regard the nature of substance, namely, by believing erroneously that there can be a multiplicity of created substances in addition to the infinite substance, then it would be self-evident to us that "it pertains to the nature of substance to exist". That is, given that we are confused in the particular way in which we regard the nature of substance, we are prevented from appreciating what is self-evident in itself. Were we not confused to begin with, we would accept E1p7 as axiomatic. This makes it clear that the first two parts of the *Ethics* are at least partially structured in such a way as to relieve us from our confusion and move us towards adequate understanding. The most striking evidence that we are setting off on such an epistemological journey— from confusion to adequate knowledge—are the first thirteen propositions of Part One, which suppose that there can be a multiplicity of substances. Spinoza, in these first few propositions, leads us by calling to our attention what it means to be a substance, in order for us to realize that there cannot be a multiplicity of substances, and ultimately to accept that there is only one substance (E1p14) as well as that everything that is, is in God and conceived through God (1p15).

Spinoza, then, seems to hold that axioms are truths we can latch onto, or that they are readily available even at the beginning of our inquiry, even while we might still be highly confused, unaware, and mistaken about their implications and ontological underpinnings. With this in mind, let us consider first E2a2: "Man thinks". E2a2 is axiomatic because our experience immediately provides us with the recognition that we think. This is, of course, in a way reminiscent of Descartes' *cogito*, although Spinoza, strikingly, phrases it in general terms and not in the first person. One reason for this might be that Spinoza intentionally wishes to avoid evoking the *cogito*, seeing as Descartes held the ontological underpinning of "I think, I am" to be that he is a *created* thinking substance. One could read the transition from Meditation Two to Meditation Three in this way. The meditator notices in Meditation Two that she cannot doubt that she thinks (seems to perceive,

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doubts, etc.), and thus realizes she is a thinking thing. Later, in Meditation Three, the Meditator recognizes that, since she doubts, she is not perfect, that is, not infinite by nature, and subsequently comes to recognize that her existence depends on what is infinite by nature:

> Yet if I derived my existence from myself, then I should neither doubt nor want, nor lack anything at all; for I should have given myself all the perfections of which I have any idea, and thus I should myself be God. (CSM 2: 33)

However, it is apparent to the meditator that she does doubt, having performed hyperbolic doubt in the previous two meditations, and thus the very act of thinking takes the meditator to reflect upon her ability to doubt. Thus, in Meditation Three, the meditator comes to recognize that what metaphysically grounds their ability to doubt is that they are dependent, created substances. This is how the meditator comes, in the order of discovery, to learn the ontological fact that there is an infinite substance and a *created* thinking substance. Spinoza supposedly has already made us see that a substance cannot be finite in Part One, but since we might easily fall into error if he had said "I think", he states it more generally: "Man thinks". Nonetheless, that we think need not be deduced from anything else, since it is a fact readily available in experience at the outset of our epistemological journey. This, of course, does not mean that we know at the start of our epistemological trajectory what the ontological underpinning of this circumstance is—we clearly, and significantly, do not. This point of epistemic departure allows for and requires philosophical investigation into what makes this point of origin possible, which is precisely what Spinoza demands from the reader.

Significantly, this axiom is placed in Part Two, because Spinoza has already established several important metaphysical guidelines in Part One. For example, he has ruled out that there is a multiplicity of substances (E1p14), and he has established that substance is necessarily infinite (E1p8), that anything that is, is in God and conceived through God (E1p15), and that finite modes follow as members of an infinite network of finite modes (1p28). Putting together this metaphysical knowledge with what is immediately available in experience yields an account of what makes this experience possible in the first place. E2a2 renders concrete some things we know only generally from Part One. For example, since it is undeniable that we think, that is, that we exist, we can conclude, given Part One, that we are not a finite substance but rather are in God and conceived through God (E1p8 and E1p15). A much more important realization that we can make from this, given that it is self-evident that we think, is that thought is an attribute of God. Recall that in Part One, Spinoza does not identify which attributes the infinite substance has, but only gives an outline of their general characteristics. For instance, they express God's infinite and eternal nature (E1p11), and they do not imply that the substance can be divided into parts (E1p12 and E1p13). Indeed, the very first proposition of

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Part Two is that Thought is an attribute of God or God is a thinking thing. I will return to discuss the first two propositions of Part Two later on. For now, it suffices to note that there is a connection between E2a2 and the placement of E2p1 in Part Two of the *Ethics.* E2a2 is axiomatic because it is immediately available in experience, and, furthermore, allows us to recognize the instantiation of several things we only know generally or theoretically from Part One. This last point makes it clear that although "Man thinks" is immediately available in experience, this is not tantamount to establishing it ad hoc or in violation of E1a4 or the Principle of Sufficient Reason.[5] Being able to provide a full account of what makes it at all possible for it to be the case that "Man thinks" requires a lot of philosophical work, namely, tracking what it must be conceived through—that is, the entire epistemological journey which culminates in adequate knowledge.

At first glance, E2a4 seems to be analogous to E2a2, but under the attribute of Extension. To a certain extent, that is true. E2a4 is also pointing towards something that is immediately given in experience: the sensory first-person bodily perspective or "bodily subjectivity". What these two axioms share is that they are experientially self-evident and provide us with immediate access to the availability and existence of the first-person perspective. It will, naturally, take a lot of philosophical work to understand what the ontological underpinnings of these two experiential points of departure are. Being able to track their causal nexus, and more generally understanding what accounts for these two points of departure, is precisely the epistemological trajectory we must traverse on the way to adequate knowledge.

If E2a4 is given any consideration at all by commentators, it at most gets cast as parallel to E2a2, simply rephrased under the attribute of Extension.[6] However, had the two axioms been indeed perfectly parallel, E2a4 would have read: "Man senses". As we can see, though, this is not what Spinoza says. This alone should spark our curiosity with respect to E2a4 and merit closer attention. Spinoza is pointing to the fact that, upon simple introspection, bodily subjectivity reveals itself to be more than just the fact that "we sense", that "we sense our bodies", or even that "we sense our bodies affected". Rather, bodily subjectivity reveals itself to be sensing our bodies affected in many ways or by many modes (the Latin *multi modi* can be read either way).[7] Let us consider then what is experientially available to

[5] On the importance of the Principle of Sufficient Reason for Spinoza's project see, for example, Della Rocca, "Interpreting Spinoza: The Real Is the Rational".

[6] For an analogous analysis which takes 2A2 to be central to Spinoza's project, see Renz, *The Explainability of Experience: Realism and Subjectivity in Spinoza's Theory of the Human Mind* and "Finite Subjects in the Ethics: Spinoza on Indexical Knowledge, the First Person, and the Individuality of Human Minds".

[7] The Latin word "modus" can be translated to mean either "way" or the more technical "mode". For our purposes, both work: in that what I sense in experience is my body affected in many ways, cashing this out metaphysically entails my body being affected by other modes of extension. In other words, the term "mode" can work at both levels— one informally, which picks out what we sense phenomenologically, and the other technical, which picks out what is metaphysically the case, that is, that we are affected by other modes of substance.

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me. Upon introspection, I can note that at this moment I sense right now that my body is resting on something (the chair), I feel something hard (the keys of the keyboard) at my fingertips, I hear voices (my children playing in another room) in the background, etc. That is, at the phenomenological level, I do not merely "sense" or "sense my body", but I sense being affected by many things. Note that this does not imply that I sense some definite unit that is my body, but rather that I have sensations of parts of my body being affected by other things, and that these sensations are continuously changing and varying.[8] What is given experientially then, is in one sense quite thin: I sense multiple bodily affections. On the other hand, this experientially immediate sensation is complex inasmuch as I sense a multiplicity of bodily affections, and these affections indicate something that I sense as "my body" (whatever that may be) as well as something external. Spinoza's recognition of this phenomenological fact has far-reaching implications, as we shall come to appreciate shortly.

9.2 E2a4 and E1p28

One crucially important aspect about E2a4 that tends to have gone largely unnoticed is that it gives us immediate, undeniable experience or access to the fact that finite things exist. Not only does sensing our bodies affected in many ways give us an immediate experience that there are finite things, but it does so in abundance, as we will see shortly. This might seem astonishing, since it has been traditionally assumed that one of the central problems that arise for Spinoza is how finite things are possible within his monistic metaphysics. Commentators such as Hegel, and more recently Della Rocca, have argued that, ultimately, Spinoza does not have the metaphysical resources to claim that there are real finite modes. While Hegel adopts an idealist view of finite modes, Della Rocca has argued for finite modes being ultimately incoherent.[9] Part of the issue seems to be that it is not clear how to derive finite modes from an infinite attribute of substance. That is, the idealist finds it difficult, if not impossible, to derive particular bodies, for example, from infinite Extension.[10] I have discussed this issue at length elsewhere, so I will only be mentioning it here without fully arguing for it.[11] While I am sympathetic to the view that finite modes cannot be deduced from an infinite attribute (even as an

[8] This fits well with Spinoza's rather fluid understanding of what counts as a singular individual thing. See E2def7 and the Physical Interlude between E2p13 and E2p14.

[9] See, for example, Hegel and Brown, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy. The Lectures of 1825–1826 Vol. 3*, p. 503, and Della Rocca, "The Elusiveness of the One and the Many in Spinoza: Substance, Attribute, and Mode".

[10] Tschirnhaus in Letters 81 and 83 raises this objection.

[11] See Shein, "The Road to Finite Modes in Spinoza's *Ethics*", and "Spinning Strands into Aspects: Realism, Idealism, and Finite Modes in Spinoza".

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infinite mediate mode), I do not accept the conclusion which rejects the reality of finite modes altogether.[12]

In contrast, I hold that Spinoza does not need to prove or deduce from general premises that there are finite modes, because it is readily available in experience that finitude exists. Sensing being affected, which is what we find at the outset of our epistemological trajectory from confusion to adequate knowledge, is one way of experiencing being finite. That is, our philosophical task or our intellectual emendation lies not in showing *that* finite things exist (which is what commentators by and large assume the task is), but rather in explaining—given that they undeniably exist—how they are possible. In other words, our philosophical task with respect to finite things is to track their causal dependence.

Not only does E2a4 point to the fact that finitude is readily available to us, but it does so, as I said, in abundance. Here again, all that is required is simple introspection regarding my bodily subjectivity. Upon introspection, I realize that what is immediately available to me is that I sense my body affected. That is, I have immediate access to something rudimentary that is "myself" and "another".[13] This is given simply by noting that an affection requires an affect*ed* side and an affect*ing* side. Sensing being affected presupposes finitude (and, in particular, my *own* finitude) in the following ways. First, to sense something external to me (whatever I may turn out to be), implies that I am not infinite. Second, to sense being affected by something implies that I am in one sense or another passive, that is, again, not infinite. Third, I do not merely sense my body being affected, but I sense it being affected in many ways or by many modes. The very multiplicity of affections, which are immediately sensed as particular, along with the conclusion arrived at in Part One, make it explicit that there are finite things.[14] Spinoza then, I suggest, does not provide a deduction of any particular finite thing, because he takes it to be readily available to us in experience that finite things exist, and therefore no such deduction is required. This is not to say that once we have tracked what makes finite things possible in the first place, namely, their causal and conceptual dependencies all the way to an infinite attribute, I cannot also come to appreciate how all finite things follow from God.[15]

However, in parallel to what I said earlier regarding E2a2, this does not mean that Spinoza establishes brutely that there are finite modes. Had he done that, it would have been the quick and inelegant demise of his rationalist aspirations. E2a4 points to the fact that at the very outset of our epistemological journey we find an

[12] In this I am closer to Renz, but for different reasons; cf. Renz, "Finite Subjects in the Ethics."

[13] In the Dutch translation this axiom is stated as claiming that we sense *our body* affected in many ways, while in the Latin the indexical is omitted. It might be that in the Latin version Spinoza is more careful about what is included in this sensation. In particular, it refrains from making the suggestion that we sense some rigid individual, "my body", but is rather making the "thinner" claim that we sense bodily affections.

[14] I have argued for this point at length in Shein, "Spinning Strands into Aspects".

[15] I argue for this last point more in depth in Shein, "The Road to Finite Modes".

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abundance of finitude. Our philosophical task is to trace the causal and conceptual dependencies or come to recognize the necessary ontological underpinnings of finite things. Much of this work, however, has already been established in Part One, for example that these sensations are modes of God (and not of a created substance, say). More importantly, insofar as they are finite modes, E1p28 establishes what constitutes their existence as finite. I have argued for this elsewhere,[16] but for our purposes here, I will note some key features of E1p28 and how they are expressed or mirrored by 2a4.

Although it has mostly escaped notice, E1p28 is phrased conditionally:

> Every singular thing, or any thing which is finite and has a determinate existence, can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect *unless* it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another cause, which is also finite and has a determinate existence; and again, this cause also can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another, which is also finite and has a determinate existence, and so on, to infinity. (C 1:432/G 2:69; italics added)

That is, E1p28 does not establish that there *are* finite modes, but rather that finite modes can only exist (and be determined to produce an effect) if they come as part of a network of finite modes. Another way of putting it is as follows: E1p28 shows how finite modes are *possible* within a monistic metaphysics, but does not show that there are, in fact, *any*. The heavy lifting of showing that there are finite modes is done by E2a4, but it turns out that this so-called "heavy lifting" is very easy to do, since the existence of finitude is given in abundance in experience. This helps a great deal in explaining why Spinoza seems oblivious to the kinds of worries that motivate idealist-leaning interpretations such as Hegel's and Della Rocca's. Note that this relation between E1p28 and E2a4 is similar to the way in which Part One of the *Ethics* lays out many characteristics of attributes such as being infinite, eternal, etc., and it is only in Part Two that Thought and Extension are demonstrated to be attributes of the infinite substance (E2p1 and E2p2).

Another important feature of E1p28 that I have insisted on is that the causal relation among finite modes is to be understood primarily as that of determination, and, in the case of bodies, as *surface* determination. This, too, is clearly brought out phenomenologically by E2a4. What we sense is our body being affected, that is, the changes in our surface determination: the keyboard pushing against my fingers, the chair pressing against my back, the wind on my face, and so forth. Furthermore, I have argued that, in E1p28, when we understand the fundamental causation at play as determination, any particular finite mode is determined immediately by its

[16] Shein, "Causation and Determinate Existence of Finite Modes in Spinoza".

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surrounding bodies. These surrounding bodies are themselves determined by their surrounding bodies and so on, ad infinitum. This means that any particular body is determined immediately by its surrounding bodies, and mediately by all the other bodies. Although E2a4 does not claim that we sense the totality of bodies, it does say that we sense being affected by many modes. That is, since we have immediate experiential access to there being a multiplicity of bodies—that is, more than just my own—and by implementing the lessons learnt in Part One, we can come to understand that we are, in fact, sensing the totality of bodies (some immediately and the rest mediately). Coming to recognize ourselves as part of the totality of bodies, as well as appreciating that we are at once both affected and affecting is one of the main aims of our intellectual emendation as we proceed through the *Ethics.*

The final point I would like to make in the context of E1p28 is to recall the definition of something finite in E1def2. The definition reads: "That thing is said to be finite in its own kind that can be limited (*terminare)* by another of the same nature" (C 1:408/G 2:45). The definition states that for something to be finite, it must be determined by something else, that is, it owes its finitude to something external.[17] E1p28 makes it clear that for something finite to be determined, it must be determined by the totality of finite things. E2a4 makes sensing the determination immediately available in experience. What it means to sense my body is to sense it affected, that is, to experience a change in its surface determination. That is, not only is it true that to be finite is to be determined, but the fact that I am determined by other bodies is readily available to me in experience. My own finitude, then, is immediately available to me in experience.

9.3 E2a4 and E3p6

At first glance, it might seem that all that is necessary for sensing my body as affected is to sense that I am passive with respect to something. Although this is true, it only partially accounts for what is required for being affected. For Spinoza, passivity requires or presupposes activity. Not only is activity presupposed, but it is ontologically prior to passivity. To understand this, we should note that activity and passivity are not contrary for Spinoza. As he says in E3def2, passivity is partial activity, not the total absence of activity: "On the other hand, I say that we are acted on when something happens in us, or something follows from our nature, of which we are only a partial cause" (C 1:493/G 2:139). There is a deep reason why this is so for Spinoza: for something to be completely passive, it must be not in God or conceived through God—perhaps something akin to Descartes' extended substance (or at least as Spinoza understood it). One of Spinoza's criticisms of

[17] I elaborate this point further in Shein, "Causation and Determinate Existence of Finite Modes".

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Descartes' material substance was that it was devoid of activity, or as he puts it in a letter to Tschirnhaus: "[. . .] from Extension as conceived by Descartes, to wit an inert mass, it is not only difficult, as you say, but quite impossible to demonstrate the existence of bodies. For matter at rest, as far as in it lies, will continue to be at rest, and will not be set in motion except by a more powerful external cause" (Letter 81; G 4:332). However, since Spinoza shows that no substance can be created, and whatever is, is in God and conceived through God (E1p15), finite things, being modes of the infinite substance, although determined, cannot be devoid of all activity.

Thus, any given case of passivity must be understood not as inactivity but rather as partial activity. We might initially, confusedly, think that sensing being affected is a result of being inactive. However, once we are clearer about the necessary metaphysical underpinning of our experience, we can note that sensing being affected is in fact due to our partial activity. The question then is: in what does my activity consist? Since external bodies determine or hinder my activity, one way to discover in what my activity consists, is to inquire in what it would consist if, *per impossibile*, there were no external bodies.[18] Since the determination among bodies is that of surface determination, we can think of my body as bounded by other bodies. In addition, we learn from E1p28 that my being qua finite consists in being bounded by the immediately surrounding bodies, but mediately by the totality of bodies. Since external bodies determine my own (E1p28), were there no external bodies, my body would be undetermined, or rather, unbounded. Or in other words, it would be unbounded Extension.

Although Spinoza owes much of his thinking about Extension and its nature to Descartes, as has been set out, he diverges significantly from Descartes in taking Extension to be essentially active. That Extension is active in and of itself is a direct consequence of its being an attribute of the infinite substance.[19] One of Spinoza's aims in Part One is to set the stage so that he can claim in Part Two that Extension is an attribute of God, or that God is an extended thing, in E2p2. Two claims made in Part One will come to bear on our topic. First, it cannot follow from any attribute that the substance is divisible into parts, even if Extension turns out to be an attribute of God (E1p12, E1p13 and E1p15schol). Second, each attribute expresses God's infinite and eternal essence (E1p11). Since the infinite substance, qua infinite, cannot be passive in any way, that is, nothing can act on it, this feature of substance must be expressed under every attribute. In particular, it will also be

[18] Spinoza's invitation to consider something *quantum in se est*, as he does for example in E3p6, is just such a conditional. In this latter case we are invited to consider something insofar as it is a thing or has being—that is, insofar as it is active. This is in no conflict with the fact that *in re* no finite thing can be perfectly active. A further notable example of this methodology is articulated in the TIE, paragraph 57, where we are asked to consider a candle without its surrounding bodies.

[19] See the epistolary exchange between Spinoza and Tschirnhaus on this issue in Letters 80–83.

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expressed under the attribute of Extension. Therefore, Extension, insofar as it is an attribute of substance, is active. Or rather, to conceive something under the attribute of Extension is to conceive it as active extension. We can now put together several points: since the determination of the body is primarily surface determination, were the bodies that surround my own, *per impossibile*, to be removed, there would be nothing to hinder or forestall my extension. Therefore, since there is nothing according to our hypothesis that is hindering my extension, I would in that case actively extend ad infinitum.

This tendency to extend ad infinitum can be thought of also as a *striving* to extend ad infinitum. It is a striving rather than an actuality because our bodies, of course, do not exist in isolation but are surrounded or bounded by other bodies. Each of these bodies is in turn itself striving to extend ad infinitum. What we have, then, is a network of bodies which are all striving to extend ad infinitum. Notice that we need not deduce or construct this network one body at a time—this simply could never be done. It is readily available to me in experience that I sense my body affected in many ways. We can begin to provide an analysis of this experiential given: what I sense when I sense my body affected is how the surrounding bodies are striving as much as they can to extend into me. However, at the same time, I sense that I resist their impingement, that is, they fail in annihilating me. This resistance is my own striving to extend into them, or, we might say, persevering in my existence. What I sense is thus metaphysically highly complex but phenomenologically simple. The metaphysical analysis of what is given immediately in experience is that I simultaneously sense both my striving to extend into other bodies, and their striving to extend into me, but I sense this from a given perspective, namely, my own.

In Part Three, this striving is given the name *conatus*. The recognition given immediately in experience that I am also active, or that I resist the impingement of other bodies, helps to explain why the introduction of power or opposition in finite things in Part Three is not ad hoc.[20] That is, we can see the emergence of the conatus as focusing on my activity rather than my passivity when I am affected. That is the sense in which, given that any instance is both an instance of affecting and being affected, I can turn my attention to either one. The important point for our purposes is that I can understand that my own activity, after much arduous philosophical reflection, is essential to me, and is, in a sense, immediately given in experience. I do not have to deduce or prove my own striving to extend ad infinitum. It is there at the outset, but I am simply too confused at that the stage of inquiry to recognize it for what it is.

[20] For an example of how commentators address some of the issues surrounding the *conatus* doctrine, see Lin, "Spinoza's Metaphysics of Desire: The Demonstration of IIIP6".

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9.4 E2a4 and E2p13

E2a4 plays a pivotal role, of course, in revealing the object of the mind—E2p13 is the only place where Spinoza actually uses this axiom in a demonstration. A slightly over-simplified way of stating it as follows: if the object of our mind were not our body, our experience would be different. However, our experience is that of sensing our bodies affected in my ways, and so the object of the idea, which is the mind, is the body. What might be perhaps less obvious is that E2a4 already encapsulates the intentional relation between mind and body expressed in E2p13. To sense my body affected in many ways is to experience the inherent intentionality of ideas of affections. At the same time, this experience reveals the nature of the object, namely, my bodily affections. I do not, of course, initially recognize this, but can, upon reflection, note that this is the case. In this regard, I would like to make two remarks: first, E2a4 and E2p13 make it clear that all my ideas ultimately must be of my body.[21] Second, although my ideas are ideas of the affections of my body, since these affections are analysable as surface determinations, any idea of any surface determination involves the affecting body as well. This ultimately gets worked out more clearly in E2p16, which states, "the idea of any mode in which the human body is affected by external bodies must involve the nature of the human body and at the same time the nature of the external body" (C 1:463/G 2:103). Notice that this suggests, on the one hand, that all my ideas are of my body; yet, on the other hand, there is a sense in which I have access to what is beyond my body, namely, the affecting bodies. This is the reason why the phrasing of E2a4 as not simply "we sense" or "we sense our bodies" is so crucial. We do not sense our bodies simpliciter. We sense our bodies affected by many modes or in many ways. It is precisely the fact that we sense being affected by other modes that gives us access (even if horribly confused) to what is external to us.

While we might accept the view regarding modes in general that has been outlined, we might nonetheless be prompted to ask: but what is specifically human about this kind of sensing, that is, sensing that we are both determining and being determined? On the one hand, I think a good answer—and one in line with Spinoza's insistence that we are part of Nature and not a dominion within a dominion—would be: nothing. There is nothing fundamentally special about the way we sense as opposed to how anything else in the universe senses. In this regard, I think Spinoza's claims in the scholium to E2p13 are very telling. In the first part of the scholium, he is adamant that the human mind, that is, the idea of the human body, is not special and that "whatever we have said of the idea of the Human body must also be said of the idea of any thing" (E1p13s). On the other hand, given that

[21] There have been, although now less common, views which held the object of my idea to be double, one being of my body, and the other of an external object. See, for example, Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, pp. 153–159.

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we have the particular bodies we do, our sensory or bodily experience of the world is particular to us. Recall that Spinoza says in the scholium, "to determine what is the difference between the human Mind and the others, and how it surpasses them, it is necessary for us, as we have said, to know the nature of its object, i.e., of the human Body" (C 1:458/G 2:97). That is, if, in spite of what he had earlier said about the human mind taking its body as its object (and despite this being true for all things), we would nonetheless like to describe in what way we are "more excellent" than other minds, we could. That is, we can give a description of the particular bodies we have and the ways they interact with other bodies. The more we recognize the intentionality presupposed in E2a4, the easier it is to understand the section between E2p13 and E2p14, which is often erroneously dubbed "the Physical Digression". It is not a digression at all. The idea that Spinoza is pursuing here is that any investigation into the structure of finite modes has to proceed on a physical level, or at least can be done with greater ease when looking at bodies.

9.5 E2a4 and E2p2

The last proposition I want to draw attention to is E2p2: "Extension is an attribute of God, or God is an extended thing". At first glance, the demonstration of this proposition seems baffling if not all together exasperating: "[t]he demonstration of this proceeds in the same way as that of the preceding Proposition" (C 2:449/G2 2:86). Prima facie, we would have expected Spinoza to take special care with the demonstration that is supposed to show that Extension is an attribute of God. After all, this is, supposedly, one of his more radical theses—and one he is fully aware will not be accepted with ease. In Part One, he very carefully sets the stage for the possibility that Extension will turn out to be a divine attribute. Relevant here is, of course, the preparatory work for this conclusion in E1p12, E1p13, and the scholium to E1p15. However, not only do we not get a proper, spelt-out demonstration, but he does not even grace us with a scholium. This leads me to believe that Spinoza genuinely thought the demonstration was straightforward.

Let us consider then the demonstration to E2p1:

> Singular thoughts, or this or that thought, are modes that express God's nature in a certain and determinate way (by 1P25C). Therefore, (by 1D5) there belongs to God an attribute whose concept all singular thoughts involve, and through which they are also conceived. Therefore, Thought is one of God's infinite attributes, which expresses an eternal and infinite essence of God (see 1D6), or God is a thinking thing, q.e.d. (C 1:448/G 2:86)

What is interesting is that this demonstration seems to follow the order of discovery, going from a particular thought to the conclusion that Thought is an attribute of

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God. In E2p1 he takes it for granted that we know that there are singular thoughts. Although E2a2 is not explicitly mentioned in the demonstration, it is presupposed by it. If the demonstration of E2p2 "proceeds in the same way", it must follow this order of discovery as well. A point of origin in the order of discovery is E2a4: "we sense our bodies affected in many ways". Therefore, a reconstruction of the demonstration of E2p2 would not begin with "singular bodies, or this or that body", but rather with "singular bodily affections". In parallel to E2p1 that presupposes E2a2, E2p2 presupposes E2a4. The reconstruction would read as follows:

> Singular bodily affections, or this or that bodily affection, are modes which express God's nature in a certain and determinate way (by 1P25C). Therefore (by 1D5) there belongs to God an attribute whose concept all singular affections involve, and through which they are also conceived. Therefore, Extension is one of God's infinite attributes, which expresses an eternal and infinite essence of God (see 1D6), *or* God is an extended thing.

Although more interpretative work is required here, the recognition that the demonstration presupposes what is undeniably given in experience, namely, our awareness of bodily affections, makes Spinoza's attitude towards the demonstration much more appealing.

9.6 Conclusion

Although the small number of explicit references to E2a4 in the *Ethics* might give the impression that it plays a negligible role for Spinoza, I hope to have shown otherwise by pointing out its relation to core Spinozistic doctrines. Our bodily subjectivity sits at the core of our ability to explain the world we live in along with the terms with which we do so. Our first-person experience of sensing our body as affected gives us access to the intentional relation among attributes, thereby cementing that the body is ultimately the object that constitutes the idea that is our mind. Furthermore, it makes us immediately aware of the existence of finite things. It also shows us that we are not powerless but are active. Any inquiry into Spinoza's view of the human lifeform must proceed from a deep and full appreciation of what it means for us to have the experience of sensing our body affected in many ways as we in fact do. Take a bow, E2a4. You deserve it.

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10
Spinoza and the Galenic Idea of the Human Body

Beth Lord

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In both the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics* Spinoza claims that the living human body maintains a consistent ratio of motion and rest as it undergoes change. While this idea may look idiosyncratic, it has a long heritage in medieval Galenism. The medical philosopher and practitioner Galen (130–216 CE) and his followers held that each human body is characterized by a balance of elements that constitutes its temperament. A person's elemental constitution is subject to variation under changing conditions, but must remain in the right proportions. Proportional balance entails both physical and mental health, and is felt as bodily and mental equilibrium. This theory, and the associated ideal of balance, dominated medieval and Renaissance medical thinking, and continued to be influential in early modern Europe even as new theories of the body and medicine started to be advanced.[1] Spinoza had direct connections to the medical world. He owned Galenist texts and he attended anatomical lectures at Leiden, and two of his correspondents published texts based on Galenic doctrine.[2] Spinoza's conception of the human body suggests an attempt to add mechanistic concepts to a Galenic model: life and health depend on the maintenance of a certain proportion of elements—motion and rest, rather than the classical elements of heat, cold, moisture, and dryness—among the body's parts.

Yet while bodily equilibrium is necessary for life, it is not sufficient for well-being. To achieve "moral" health—a high degree of virtue, power, and freedom—Spinoza thinks we must go further. A "*human* life", after all, is defined "not merely by the circulation of the blood [. . .], but mostly by reason, the true virtue and life of the Mind" (TP 5.5). As living beings who seek understanding, we strive to maximize our power to think rationally and to be the adequate cause of our actions. That striving, or *conatus*, is the "actual essence" of a living being (E3p7). On the one hand, the living human being aims for physical equilibrium and mental equanimity: the ancient and medieval ideal of balance. On the other hand, the living

[1] See Kaye, *A History of Balance, 1250–1375*, Chaps 3–4; Temkin, *Galenism; Rise and Decline of a Medical Philosophy*.

[2] See Adler, "Mortality of the Soul from Alexander of Aphrodisias to Spinoza".

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human being aims to exercise its essence with ever-greater perfection: the modern ideal of agential striving. As living beings, we aim to maintain equilibrium, but as living *human* beings we aim to transcend it. Spinoza's thinking about this tension changed between the *Short Treatise,* in which Galenism is prominent, and the *Ethics,* where it has a more vestigial role.

In this chapter I aim to show that Spinoza's concept of the living human being in the *Ethics* is based both on his adherence to Galenism as an explanatory framework for living bodies, and on his rejection of Galenism as an explanatory framework for human experience and motivation. The result is a concept of the human lifeform that is at once medieval and modern. In the first section I give a brief account of Galen's concept of the living body and the adoption of the ideal of balance by medieval and Renaissance thinkers. In the second section I discuss Spinoza's reliance on Galenism in the *Short Treatise*, where not only the body but also the soul and its feelings and desires are explained in Galenic terms. In the third section I discuss how Spinoza changed his thinking about the body by replacing the Galenic notion of an essential proportion with a more mechanistic concept of the ratio of motion and rest. In the fourth section I explain how the *conatus* doctrine of the *Ethics* marks Spinoza's rejection of Galenism as an explanatory framework for what the living being feels, wants, and seeks.

10.1 The Galenic Concept of the Living Body

The medical philosopher and practitioner Galen (130–216 CE) drew on both Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy to develop his theory of health. His extensive writings, translated into Latin in the mid-twelfth century, were foundational for medical knowledge in the late medieval, Renaissance, and early modern periods. Galen draws on the Greek notion of *isonomia* to develop his central concept of health as a balance of the four primordial qualities of hot, cold, wet, and dry. Unlike Plato and Aristotle, who understood health to be a state of perfect balance, Galen holds that balance takes no single ideal form. Each human body has its own *krasis* (in Latin, *complexio* or *temperamentum,* usually translated into English as "temperament" or "mixture"), the proportionally balanced blend of elements specific to it, to which the person's appearance, emotions, and behaviour correspond.[3] A body's *krasis* changes according to the configuration of its parts and its responses to its environment. "Health" describes a range of states in which each part is internally well balanced, and balanced relations hold between parts, and between each part and the body as a whole. A healthy body is therefore a dynamic equilibrium

[3] See, for example, "Mixtures" and "The Art of Medicine", in Galen, *Selected Works*. Humour theory is based on the four fluids ("humours") thought to be generated from the primordial elements, the mixture of which underpins the phlegmatic, melancholic, choleric, and sanguine character types.

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of parts whose differing proportions of heat, cold, moisture, and dryness are proportionate overall. Galen understands health to be a dynamic state that depends on the individual and their circumstances. What is balanced and healthy in one context may be unbalanced and harmful in another.[4]

The sick or unhealthy body is out of balance due to disproportion in the relations of elements in one or more of its parts, or in their relations to each other, or in their relations to the whole. To restore health, the doctor must find the proportions of elements that achieve a balanced temperament. The right balance of elements for the body (or body part), the *eucraton* or "medium complexion", is reached not by establishing the arithmetically equal mid-point between hot and cold or dry and wet (the Aristotelian mean), but by determining the proportions of those qualities that meet the specific needs of the individual:

> We require medicines proportioned to the extent of the imbalance. If, for example, a body deviates from the norm by a figure of ten to the hot and by a figure of seven to the dry, then the healthful cause must be ten to the cold and seven to the moist.[5]

As the body and its circumstances change, so too does the proportionate balance that constitutes health. Health therefore is neither a fixed state nor an extreme opposed to sickness: it exists on a continuum or "latitude" with sickness and a neutral or "neither" realm in between.[6] The state of the body can be represented as moving along this continuum as its circumstances change.

As for the soul, Galen understands it in broadly Platonic terms, as the entity that forms and orders the body. However, he also takes the soul to be determined by the body and its mixtures, and declares himself undecided as to whether the soul is material or immaterial.[7] If the soul is the form of the body, and the body is characterized by a particular mixture of heat, cold, moisture, and dryness, then "the substance of the soul, too, must be some mixture of these four qualities".[8] Changes in the body's balance affect and change those of the soul; indeed, the soul is "a slave to the mixtures of the body":

> These have the power to separate [the soul from the body], to make it lose its wits, to destroy its memory and understanding, to make it more timid, lacking in confidence and energy, as happens in cases of melancholy—or the opposite of these qualities, as in the case of the moderate drinker of wine.[9]

[4] See "The Art of Medicine", in Galen, pp. 347, 374. See also Kaye, *A History of Balance,* pp. 155–156.
[5] "The Art of Medicine", p. 382.
[6] "The Art of Medicine", p. 350; Kaye, *A History of Balance,* pp. 141–144, 152–153.
[7] See "The Soul's Dependence on the Body", in Galen, *Selected Works*; Temkin, *Galenism*, p. 44.
[8] "The Soul's Dependence on the Body", p. 153.
[9] "The Soul's Dependence on the Body", p. 155.

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An unbalanced bodily mixture has deleterious effects on the soul, its activity and its passions, in extreme cases resulting in madness, amnesia, or death. By contrast, a healthy, balanced soul reflects a healthy, balanced body. The health of the body therefore has consequences for mental and moral health. Since our behaviour follows from our bodily condition, and our actions depend on our temperament, it is ethically good to pursue health: a state of balanced equilibrium, for which temperate moderation is essential.[10]

Galen's medical philosophy was hugely influential on medieval thought, transmitted through texts such as Avicenna's eleventh-century *Canon of Medicine*. For Avicenna, the temperament of the body results from the interaction of primary qualities that is uniform throughout the whole.[11] This dynamic uniformity means that the body can undergo change while maintaining its form. Body parts differ and vary, but a regular pattern of interaction is needed for the body to maintain equilibrium. Galenism continued to be used in medical practice in the seventeenth century, even while important discoveries in anatomy started to displace it.[12] Spinoza was unquestionably familiar with Galenic theory in general, and very likely knew it in some detail. Avicenna's medical texts were translated into Hebrew and widely known amongst Jewish physicians and philosophers, including Maimonides.[13] Spinoza attended medical lectures at Leiden in which Galenic thought was taught alongside new anatomical theories.[14] He owned a text by Jean Riolan, who tried to marry Galen's principles to Harvey's theory of blood circulation, and he may have known Joseph Solomon Delmedigo's *Sefer 'Elim*, which discusses Alexander of Aphrodisias using a quantitative ratio to describe the Galenic concept of temperament.[15] Galenic doctrine had an important place in the theories of Dutch physicians, including Spinoza's correspondents Lambert van Velthuysen and Lodewijk Meijer. Meijer, in a theory of "two temperaments expressed in mechanical terms", associates phlegmatic temperament with a low ratio of motion to rest, and choleric with a high one.[16] As Adler points out, Spinoza's contemporaries may have understood his own "ratio of motion and rest" to be a similar attempt to express Galenic *krasis* in the language of mechanistic philosophy. The ratio, after all, is the living body's characteristic balance, which constitutes its form and sustains its life. One's ratio, on this account, establishes one's physical and mental constitution, and thereby determines how one responds to change.

[10] Temkin, *Galenism*, p. 84.
[11] Avicenna, *The General Principles of Avicenna's Canon of Medicine*, p. 24.
[12] Temkin, *Galenism*, pp. 135, 152.
[13] See Temkin, pp. 78–79; Freudenthal and Zonta, "Avicenna among Medieval Jews".
[14] Temkin, *Galenism*, p. 173.
[15] Krop, "Spinoza's Library"; Temkin, *Galenism*, p. 158n. Adler, "Mortality of the Soul", pp. 26–27.
[16] Adler, "Mortality of the Soul", p. 31.

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10.2 Galenism in the *Short Treatise*

The Galenic origin of Spinoza's concept of bodily ratio is clear in his early *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being*. In this text we see Spinoza setting out the central themes of his mature philosophy, but from a perspective that is still firmly rooted in ancient and medieval thought. The theory of the human body presented in the *Short Treatise* is more essentialist and less mechanistic than that of the *Ethics*. The mature Spinoza of the *Ethics* states that bodies are differentiated by their motions relative to one another, and seems to understand the ratio of motion and rest to be the product of the interactions of the moving parts of a body (E2lem1 + 5). For the young Spinoza of the *Short Treatise,* by contrast, the proportion of motion and rest is the essence of the body: it is prior to and causes the configuration of its parts and the differentiation of that body from others. This is set out in a series of enumerated points on the soul's relation to the body:

> 7. Each and every particular thing that comes to exist becomes such through motion and rest. The same is true of all modes in the substantial extension we call body.
>
> 8. The differences between [one body and another] arise only from the different proportions of motion and rest, by which this one is so, and not so, is this and not that.
>
> 9. From this proportion of motion and rest, then, there comes to exist also this body of ours, of which (no less than of all other things) there must exist a knowledge, Idea, etc., in the thinking thing. This Idea, knowledge, etc., then, is also our soul. (KV 2 Pref.; C 1:95/G 1:51–52)[17]

It seems that the Spinoza of the *Short Treatise* believes that the proportion of motion and rest is the essence of the body, and determines its physical form. The soul, being the idea of the body, is thus the "objective essence" of that proportion:

> The human body, then, is nothing but a certain proportion of motion and rest. So, this existing proportion's objective essence in the thinking attribute is the soul of the body. Hence when one of these modes (motion or rest) changes, either by increasing or by decreasing, the Idea also changes correspondingly. (KV 2 App. II, C 1:155/G 1:120)

[17] It is unclear what status to accord this passage. Gebhardt presents it as a note, and Gabbey ("Spinoza's Natural Science and Methodology") suggests it may not have been written by Spinoza. Curley inserts it into the main text of the *Short Treatise*, but comments that its correct placement is uncertain.

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Spinoza indicates here that the body *is* a certain proportion of motion and rest and that the soul is the idea of that proportion. The body's essential proportion is subject to change as its motion increases and decreases, and the soul changes with it. The concepts of motion and rest have replaced the concepts of the Galenic elements of hot, cold, wet, and dry, but Spinoza's understanding of body and soul as characterized by a variable balance of essential elements is broadly Galenic.

Spinoza explains that the body's essential proportion differs before birth and after death. But the soul is the idea of the *existing* body, and includes the idea only of its *living* proportion of motion and rest. The body's living proportion and the soul's idea of it change as the body interacts with other things. These changes, however, are strictly limited: excessive change to one's living proportion results in the death of the body and the destruction of the soul. The body's living proportion, then, is subject to fluctuation within a range that sustains its existence, consistent with the Galenic concept of *krasis*. In a continuation of the numbered passage just quoted, Spinoza states:

> 10. But our body had a different proportion of motion and rest when we were unborn children, and later when we are dead, it will have still another. Nevertheless, there was before our birth, and will be after our death, an Idea, knowledge, etc. of our body in the thinking thing, as there is now. But it was not, and will not be at all the same, because now it has a different proportion of motion and rest.
>
> 11. To produce in substantial thought an Idea, knowledge, mode of thinking, such as [this soul of] ours now is, not just any body whatever is required (for then it would have to be known differently than it is), but one which has this proportion of motion and rest and no other. For as the body is, so is the soul, Idea, knowledge, etc.
>
> 12. So if such a body has and preserves its proportion—say of 1 to 3—the soul and the body will be like ours now are; they will, of course, be constantly subject to change, but not to such a great change that it goes beyond the limits of from 1 to 3; and as much as it changes, so also the soul changes each time.
>
> 13. And this change, which arises in us from the fact that other bodies act on ours, cannot occur without the soul's becoming aware of it, since it too changes constantly. And this change [i.e. in the soul] is really what we call sensation.
>
> 14. But if other bodies act on ours with such force that the proportion of motion [to rest] cannot remain 1 to 3, that is death, and a destruction of the soul, insofar as it is only an idea, knowledge, etc. of a body having this proportion of motion and rest. (KV 2 Pref., C 1:95–96/G 1:52)

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Many interesting points follow from this passage: we will focus on two. First, Spinoza suggests that human life is sustainable if the body and soul maintain a specific quantitative ratio. Second, he aligns sensation with the changes the soul undergoes when the body is affected by others. Over the course of its many physical changes and mental sensations, the human being continues to live as long as its proportion remains within its sustainable range, "say of 1 to 3"—that is, as long as its motion and rest remain suitably balanced. A ratio of 1:3 can be expressed in infinite different ways (2:6, 7:21, 150:450 . . .); like Galen, Spinoza takes the living body to have a characteristic balance that changes over time but remains within a healthy "latitude". Galen states that a healthy latitude is not subject to quantitative measurement, but is defined by "the gap between perfect performance of [its] activities and definite damage to [its] activities".[18] However, some medieval Galenists developed specific numerical ratios to express this idea, as Spinoza seems to do here.[19]

Jacob Adler argues persuasively that Spinoza's concept of the proportion of motion and rest in the *Short Treatise* derives from the Galenic concept of temperament.[20] Adler suggests that by *keeping the same proportion of motion and rest* Spinoza means maintaining one's temperament in its sustainable range. As he points out, Spinoza discusses the proportion of motion and rest in the explicitly Galenic terms of heat and cold.[21] After stating that the soul changes as the body's essential proportion changes, Spinoza explains:

> For example, if the rest happens to increase, and the motion to decrease, the pain or sadness we call *cold* is thereby produced. On the other hand, if this [increase] occurs in the motion, then the pain we call *heat* is thereby produced. (KV App. II; C 1:155/G 1:120)

This echoes a passage from Descartes which explains that increased and decreased stimulation of the nerves produces sensations of heat and cold in the soul.[22] For Descartes, hot and cold are reducible to motion, such that the soul perceives them as qualities pertaining to touch. The soul's sensation of pain is occasioned by, but not the same as, these qualities. Spinoza, by contrast, indicates that a change to its balance of motion and rest causes the soul to feel a change of temperature that is

[18] "Mixtures" in Galen, *Selected Works*, p. 249.

[19] See Adler, "Mortality of the Soul", for one possible source for Spinoza's 'proportion of 1 to 3'. A quantitative understanding of latitude was developed by scholastic thinkers such as Arnau of Villanova who expressed health as a numerically graded scale. See Kaye, *A History of Balance*, Chapter 4.

[20] Adler, "Mortality of the Soul".

[21] Adler, "Mortality of the Soul", p. 28.

[22] "If this stimulation [of the nerve fibres] is increased or decreased by some unusual cause, its increase will make the soul have a sensation of heat, and its decrease a sensation of cold" *Treatise on Man,* AT XI:144 (CSM 1:103). See also *The World*, AT XI: 25–26 (CSM 1:89).

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also pain or sadness. This pain is as much mental as physical: an excessive decrease in motion cools the body and slows the mind, while an excessive increase heats the body and quickens the mind. Spinoza explains that different body parts may be imbalanced unequally, leading to different pains: being struck in the eyes with a little stick hurts more than being struck with the same stick on the hands. The stick causes excess motion ("heat") in some body parts, and excess rest ("cold") in others: the degrees of motion and rest are "not equal in all parts of our body", disrupting our overall ratio. But when some external thing causes a part to return to its original proportion, the equilibrium of that part is restored, and we feel the joy of "peace, pleasurable activity, and cheerfulness" (KV App. II; C 1:155–156/G 1:120–121).

Thus, it is not only our bodily integrity but our feelings of health and well-being that are affected by imbalances in our proportion of motion and rest. In short, our temperament—our way of being in and responding to the world—is determined by our essential proportion and its state of balance. At KV 2.19 Spinoza explains that significant alterations to our ratio—associated in the Appendix with heat and cold—cause pain, while moderate alterations that remain within our essential range can be pleasant (G 1:94n). Like Galen, Spinoza thinks that external objects can be used medically to treat the pain caused by excessive disturbance, and restore the body's proportion. When the proportion of motion and rest in the "animal spirits" is changed, "a sadness arises in [the soul], according to the change the spirits then receive" (KV 2.20, C 1:135/G 1:96).[23] This sadness can be so powerful as to prevent the soul from moving the animal spirits as it wills to. The soul's sadness arises from the perception that something bad is happening to the body, which is accompanied by an awareness of the animal spirits pressing against the heart, "just the opposite of what happens in joy" (KV 2.20, C 1:135/G 1:96n). According to the Appendix, this awareness is felt as heat or cold. Medicine and wine have the power to drive these spirits from the heart and produce a different proportion of motion and rest, diverting the soul's awareness and "driving out sadness" (KV 2.20, C 1:135/G 1:95), presumably restoring the body's characteristic temperature as they restore the soul's temperament. This passage may refer to some Galenist source: in a text well known to his medieval followers, Galen explains that wine relieves the sadness that separates the soul from the body and that makes it melancholy and incapable of action.[24]

[23] Spinoza retains the Cartesian concept of "animal spirits" in the *Short Treatise*. Like Descartes, he appears to understand them as tiny bodies that move through the nerves, transmitting information between the brain and the rest of the body, that can be moved by either the body or the soul. An excessive slowing or quickening of the animal spirits therefore has significant effects on the body's capacity to move and act, and on the soul's feeling of well-being. See KV 2.19, G 1:92–93. Spinoza later criticizes this doctrine; see E5pref.

[24] "The Soul's Dependence on the Body", in Galen, *Selected Works*, pp. 154–155. Note, however, a similar passage in Descartes' *Passions of the Soul* I:14–15 (AT XI:339–340; CSM 1:334) which may be Spinoza's source.

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These passages of the *Short Treatise* attempt to fuse mechanism with Galenism in explaining how physical changes generate mental feelings. This is particularly important in a text in which Spinoza takes a broadly Cartesian approach to the interaction of body and soul. The *Short Treatise* posits a strict separation between physical and mental causes, but maintains that the body and soul, being unified, can cause effects in one another (see KV 2.19–20). "Heat" and "cold", in this context, function as transitional terms between the physical and mental realms: they can be explained mechanistically, but as elements of temperament they also serve as sources for emotions, thoughts, and dreams. Changes of motion and rest are *felt*—bodily and mentally—as heat and cold. In an early letter, Spinoza explains that motion and rest "explain Nature as it is in itself", while hot and cold explain it only "as it is related to human sense perception" (Ep. 6, C 1:181/G 4:28). Hobbes uses Galenic concepts in a similar way in *De Corpore*: he states that appetites and aversions are physical motions of the heart, but are perceived and felt by living beings as "heat" and "cold".[25] Like the early Hobbes, the young Spinoza is committed to explaining nature mechanistically but retains Galenic qualities to explain how mechanistic interactions constitute the temperament, sensations, and feelings of the living body. Galenism, as an account of how the living body responds characteristically to its surroundings, serves as a broad explanatory framework, both for the living body itself and for what gives rise to its experience, choices, and behaviours.

10.3 Ratio and Equilibrium in the *Ethics*

In the *Ethics*, the living body and its sensations are addressed in the physical interlude of Part Two. The physical interlude has at least three purposes: it sets out the basic characteristics of bodies and the principles of their interaction; it lays the ground for an account of the body's perceptual capacities, and it establishes that bodily changes and interactions occur within the whole of physical nature. Spinoza is particularly concerned to establish principles that explain how the *human* body affects and is affected by other bodies.[26] In the *Short Treatise* Spinoza suggests that the body's essential proportion determines its interactions and how it responds to change. In the *Ethics* he takes a more holistic view: *nature as a whole* makes bodies what they are, causes them to interact, and determines each one to have a characteristic ratio that is helped and hindered by these interactions. The "ratio of motion and rest" is no longer the essence of the body determining it from within. Rather, it is a pattern of motion and rest that a body's parts produce insofar as they work together, determined by forces external to that body.

[25] Hobbes, *Elements of Philosophy, the First Section, Concerning Body*, p. 299.
[26] See Peterman, "The 'Physical' Interlude", and Jonas, "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism".

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Spinoza states that all bodies either move or are at rest at any one time; each body moves at a variable rate, and is affected by the motion and rest of other bodies (E2a1′, a2′, a1″, a2″). From these axioms follow basic principles of interaction: each body distinguishes itself from others through its motion at any one moment, and its state of motion or rest is not determined by itself, but by another body (E2lem1–3). Bodies are distinguished from one another only insofar as they interact, causing one another to move and rest, and to change speed and direction.

This world of moving, resting, and interacting bodies is grounded by "motion and rest" in a metaphysical sense: the "infinite mode of motion and rest" that follows immediately from the absolute nature of extended substance (see E1p21–22 and Ep. 64). About this "infinite mode of motion and rest" Spinoza has little to say.[27] He does explain that it produces another infinite mode, "the face of the whole Universe, which, however much it may vary in infinite ways, nevertheless always remains the same" (Ep. 64, C 2:439/G 4:278). In a related passage, Spinoza explains that in "the whole of nature [understood as] one Individual, [. . .] all bodies vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole Individual" (E2lem7s; C 1:462/G 2:102). Spinoza evidently understands the "infinite mode of motion and rest" to be the cause of the physical universe and to explain how it is at once infinitely variable and eternally stable.[28] He thereby intends it to explain the power of the universe to cause its parts to interact and change. "Since the nature of the universe [. . .] is absolutely infinite, its parts are regulated in infinite ways by this nature of the infinite power, and compelled to undergo infinitely many variations" (Ep. 32, C 2:19–20/G 4:173a). "Motion and rest", as a metaphysical principle, explains how the universe remains the same by regulating changes in the motion and rest of its parts. In other words, it determines the *equilibrium* of the universe: the power of the universe to preserve stability through balancing differences among its parts.[29]

Understood in this way, human bodies and their interactions contribute to a system that maintains equilibrium. The human body is a composite made up of many varied parts, each of which is a body distinguished by its own motion. What constitutes a unified whole is the external constraint on those parts to occupy the same space or to move in such a way that they "communicate their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner [or ratio: *certa quadam ratione*]" (E2a2″def; C 1:460/G 2:100). A composite whole, or individual, comes into being—and communicates motion in a fixed manner or ratio—through the pressure exerted by other things, that is, by its external milieu.[30] It is only insofar as they communicate

[27] According to one prominent line of interpretation, the term is a placeholder for an unstated set of more specific explanatory principles; see Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method*, pp. 42–47; Bennett, *Learning from Six Philosophers*, pp. 142–150.

[28] By "the infinite mode of motion and rest", therefore, Spinoza may intend nothing more than a general, pre-mechanistic principle of change and stability, or difference and sameness: terms that were associated with motion and rest in ancient thought. See, e.g., Plato, *Timaeus*, 53a–58a.

[29] See Ravven, "Ratio and Activity: Spinoza's Biologising of the Mind in an Aristotelian Key".

[30] See Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, p. 43. Hallett, *Benedict de Spinoza: The Elements of His Philosophy*, Chapter 3, makes a similar point.

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motion in a fixed manner or ratio that the body's parts pertain to its essence (E2p24dem). This marks a significant change from Spinoza's earlier position. In the *Short Treatise*, the body's ratio was identified with its essence, and the body's parts followed from it. In the *Ethics*, the body's particular configuration of parts, and their way of communicating motion and moving as one, are determined by the pressures and interactions of the bodies that immediately surround it. Nature, to preserve equilibrium, forces bodies together and causes them to communicate motion; the ratios through which they communicate establish physical forms that can persist through change. "What constitutes the form of the human Body consists in this, that its Parts communicate their motions to one another in a certain fixed proportion" (E4p39dem; C 1:568/G 2:239). Thus, while the "form" of a body depends on its ratio, as it did in the *Short Treatise*, neither term is understood any longer in terms of formal essence: in the *Ethics* a body's form is simply its physical configuration and pattern of communicating motion, as determined by its environment.[31] The maintenance of a body's ratio is the maintenance of its form through growth and change.

Spinoza specifies the ratio as a "ratio of motion and rest" (*ratio motus et quietis*, E2lem5), and links it to the human body's ability to affect and be affected in many ways (E4p39dem). While the ratio is, in a strict sense, the rate at which the body's parts communicate their motions to each other, he no longer states that the ratio is quantitative. Most scholars think that in the *Ethics*, Spinoza has in mind a more general relation: the "overall relation among parts that a complex body has some tendency to preserve".[32] The life of the human body depends on its maintaining its ratio, and its death follows from its parts "acquir[ing] a different proportion of motion and rest to one another" (E4p39s; C 1:569/G 2:240). When this happens the body's form changes: it is this change of form—always caused by external pressures (E4p20s)—that constitutes death, even if visible signs of life, such as the circulation of the blood, are maintained. Life requires sameness of form through change of parts: it depends on the body maintaining its ratio or equilibrium as it gains and loses parts and changes speed and direction. Spinoza states that the whole of nature regulates the infinite variations of its components such that "the same ratio of motion to rest [is] always [. . .] preserved in all of them at once" (Ep. 32, C 2:19/G 4:173a). In the same way, the human body changes in such a way that it preserves its ratio, form, and equilibrium, and therefore its life.

To preserve life, therefore, what matters is not preserving the specific parts of a body (which are not essential to it), nor sustaining its vital motions (which are not

[31] I sidestep here the question of Spinoza's broader use(s) of "form" in the *Ethics* and focus only on Spinoza's use of the term to refer to a body's physical configuration. I do not claim that Spinoza has abandoned the notion of formal essence entirely; only that that notion is no longer associated with the ratio of motion and rest.

[32] Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, p. 149. Some scholars have argued for a quantitative interpretation of ratio in the *Ethics;* see Gueroult, *Spinoza II: L'Âme*, pp. 165–172; Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza*, pp. 39–51.

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sufficient for life), but preserving the number and proportion of parts that maintain the right balance of motion and rest. Spinoza explains that a composite body may lose and gain parts while maintaining its form. If the number and type of replacement parts are the same as those removed, the individual "will retain its nature [. . .] without any change of form" (E2lem4). As the body grows or diminishes its parts become larger or smaller, but the individual retains its nature as long as this occurs in the right proportion to sustain its ratio:

> If the parts composing an Individual become greater or less, but in such a proportion that they all keep the same ratio of motion and rest to each other as before, then the Individual will likewise retain its nature, as before, without any change of form. (E2lem5; C 1:461/G2:100–101)

To persist through change, an individual needs to be "continually regenerated" (E2post.IV; C 1:462/G 2:102) with parts that are numerically or proportionately equal to what it had before. The equilibrium of a living body requires not only that its parts maintain a consistent balance of motion and rest, but that its parts remain in the right proportions—with the right balance of hard, soft, and fluid bodies—to do so in the manner characteristic of that individual.

Is the "ratio of motion and rest" a Galenic concept in the *Ethics,* as it clearly is in the *Short Treatise*? Adler argues that the concepts of ratio and proportion in the two texts are so different that they "can scarcely be considered synonymous".[33] It certainly seems that Spinoza abandoned the notion that the body's proportion is identical with its essence and that it *essentially* determines one's physical form and the characteristic temperament of one's soul. In the *Ethics*, he suggests that a body's ratio, physical constitution, and state of equilibrium are determined by external causes. Spinoza uses the same terminology of "ratio" across the two texts, and that concept in the *Ethics* continues to carry Galenic connotations of balance, bodily integrity, and health. Indeed, the ideal of balance seems to have been expanded to apply to all of nature, which is now conceived as a single equilibrious body. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza retains a broadly Galenic framework for understanding life: all living bodies, and nature itself, are motivated to maintain their characteristic balance within a range that constitutes their health.

The Galenic qualities of heat and cold, however, are nowhere to be found in the *Ethics*, for Spinoza no longer finds it necessary to couch a mechanistic explanation of sensation in these terms. His new doctrine of parallelism (E2p7 + s) replaces the Cartesian theory of the substantially distinct soul and body. In the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza, like Descartes, had to explain how soul and body affect one another despite being different kinds of substances, and drew on Galenic concepts to plug the gap. In the *Ethics*, mind and body are no longer two kinds of substance,

[33] Adler, "The Development of Three Concepts in Spinoza", p. 23.

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but modes of distinct attributes of the one substance. Mind and body are one thing conceived in two ways: they cannot affect each other, but act and are affected in exactly equivalent ways in their distinct attributes. Mind and body are "one and the same thing, which is conceived now under the attribute of Thought, now under the attribute of Extension", and "the order of actions and passions of our Body is, by nature, at one with the order of actions and passions of the Mind" (E3p2 and E3p2s; C 1:494/G 2:141). Spinoza now has a robust account of how physical changes that cause pain in the body are "at one with" mental changes that cause sadness in the mind. He has no need to appeal to Galenic qualities of heat and cold to explain how physical changes cause mental sensations.

So, while Spinoza retains a broadly Galenic conception of the living being's tendency to maintain equilibrium, he abandons Galenism as an explanatory framework for how the mind and body feel and respond to change. While useful for explaining a key aspect of the life of living bodies, Galenism is no longer adequate to explain *human* life.

10.4 *Conatus* and Moral Health

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza is clear that a human life is ethical and purposive, driven by the desire to increase one's power to act and understand. It is the concept of *conatus* that explains this drive and marks Spinoza's move away from Galenism. For *conatus* is a decisively modern concept that takes over two roles that had, in the *Short Treatise*, been occupied by the Galenic concept of the essential proportion of 1 to 3: *conatus* is the essence of the living being, and it functions as the living being's barometer of health and change. Specifically, *conatus* drives the living human being to seek rational understanding and free agency, and reflects the extent to which those goods are achieved. Maintaining Galenic equilibrium and health is necessary but not sufficient for this aim. As Adler puts it, "in the *Short Treatise* the chief earthly end of a human being is to maintain the ratio of motion and rest in a sort of homeostasis; while in the *Ethics* maintenance of the *ratio motus et quietis* is not the goal of human existence but a precondition for existing at all, the chief goal being to increase one's power of acting".[34]

In the *Ethics,* as we have seen, the ratio of motion and rest is not the essence of a thing but rather its externally determined, equilibrium-preserving pattern of movement. *Conatus,* a thing's striving to persevere in its being, is now its "actual essence" and the locus of its appetites and feelings (E3p7, 3p9s). "Striving" refers to a thing's power to persist in its being and to resist destructive change. Each thing is essentially determined to strive for those things that preserve its being and increase its power, and to strive against those things that harm and diminish it

[34] Adler, "Spinoza's Physical Philosophy", p. 271.

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(E3p12–13). Spinoza does not follow Descartes and Hobbes in reducing striving to motion: *conatus,* for him, is a concept of metaphysical, not physical, power.[35] Each thing expresses, "in a certain and determinate way, God's power, by which God is and acts", and is opposed to everything which can take its existence away (E3p6dem; C 1:499/G 2:146). God's power cannot be reduced to the power to move through space, and nor can an individual's striving. Every individual strives from its essential being for those changes that sustain its life, and against those that diminish it. *Conatus* is therefore much more than a striving for equilibrium: as the "actual essence" of a thing, it is the drive to actualize the thing's essence and to destroy anything that threatens it.

Maintaining its ratio of motion and rest, while necessary for sustaining a living body's health, is not sufficient to do so in the fullest sense. In both the *Short Treatise* and the physical interlude of *Ethics* Part Two, Spinoza showed that the individual is disposed towards equilibrium, maintaining its characteristic balance of motion and rest as long as external conditions allow it to. Bodies are governed by inertia and impact, and they maintain equilibrium as long as nothing radically disrupts their composition or communication. Physical bodies thus understood are "indifferent": they are caused to move and rest, to lose and gain parts, and to communicate motion just as nature determines them. But with the concept of *conatus*, Spinoza establishes that individuals (and specifically human individuals) are more than just bodies unified by motion: they are essentially determined to persevere in their being, to act for their own benefit, and to resist harm. Individuals are not merely disposed to seek equilibrium, to "(indifferently) maintain whatever prevailing state they may have as long as they are not interfered with".[36] They strive to increase their free agency and rational power, to act as determined by their nature, and to resist being caused to act and think by other things.

Living an ethical life—a human life—requires us to go beyond the "indifference" of a state of mere equilibrium, as Spinoza makes clear when explaining his concept of freedom. Spinoza rejects the assumption that denying free will entails that human beings are just indifferently pulled along by nature (Ep. 21). Indeed, he is dismissive towards individuals in a state of mere equilibrium: a state in which one's nature does not determine one to act one way or another. The *locus classicus* is the medieval example of Buridan's ass, the donkey that perishes of hunger and thirst because it is equally motivated by food and drink that are equidistant (E2p49s).[37] Young children are similarly "in a state of equilibrium", indifferently motivated to

[35] Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy* II.43 (AT VIIIA:66–67; CSM 1:243–244); Hobbes, *Elements of Philosophy, the First Section, Concerning Body*, p. 151; *Leviathan*, Chapter 6, in *Leviathan, Volume 2,* pp. 78–79. For further discussion of the background to Spinoza's concept of striving, see Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*, pp. 84–91.

[36] Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*, p. 126. See also pp. 84–91.

[37] Spinoza also uses this example at CM 2.12, G 1:277–281. Though Buridan had an important theory of equilibrium (see Kaye, *A History of Balance*, p. 456), it seems that "Buridan's ass" may not, in fact, be his invention. For discussion of Spinoza's use of this trope, see Clemens, "Spinoza's Ass".

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imitate the behaviours and desires of others because they do not know their own nature or what is truly good for it (E3p32s). Spinoza stresses that freedom does not consist in indifference, but in affirming and denying what our essential power demands, "so that the less indifferently we affirm or deny a thing, the more free we are" (Ep. 21; C 1:378/G 4:130). Individuals in a state of equilibrium are profoundly unfree, for they do not know what their advantage consists in, and are unable to affirm what is good for them or resist what is bad. While they may be living bodies that maintain their ratios of motion and rest—as asses and young children are—they do not live a *human* life, because their *conatus* does not drive them sufficiently strongly to seek understanding and to affirm what is good for them. To become the sort of beings that can reason and make free decisions they must undergo a transformation: we strive that "the infant's body may change (as much as its nature allows and assists) into another, capable of a great many things and related to a mind very much conscious of itself, of God, and of things" (E5p39s, C 1:614/G 2:305; cf. 4p39s). We strive that the infant should realize its essence by changing from a mere living body into a living human being.

It is the infant's own essence that wants and drives this transformation and that marks its progress. *Conatus* is where the individual both desires the changes it causes and feels the changes it undergoes. As the individual's power waxes and wanes it feels joy and sadness (E3p11s, 3daII–III). Joy and sadness are the feelings of one's essence passing to greater and lesser states of perfection: joy indicates an increase in physical, mental, and moral health, as the body is enhanced in its capacity to act and the mind in its capacity to think rationally, thereby increasing the individual's virtue and freedom. The connection between joy and health is made clear in Spinoza's discussion of *hilaritas* or cheerfulness, a general feeling of joy that arises when all the parts of the mind and body pass to a greater perfection together (E3p11s). When we seek specific pleasures "we desire to preserve our being without regard to our health as a whole" (E4p60s; C 1:581/G 2:256), but cheerfulness arises when "all parts of the body are equally affected" and "maintain the same proportion of motion and rest to one another" (E4p42dem; C 1:570/G 2:241). Cheerfulness is the feeling of health and balanced equilibrium, akin to the feeling of peace that follows from the restoration of the body's essential proportion in the *Short Treatise*; Spinoza opposes it to pain, melancholy, and madness (E4p44s). But this feeling of equilibrium, while good for us as living beings, does not signal the highest level of virtue in *human* beings. For that, our *conatus* must not only feel itself to be well balanced; it must rationally desire to preserve our health through the affect of *animositas* or tenacity (E3p59s; 3daXLVIII). Tenacity is a key ingredient of the fortitude that characterizes the "free man", and is felt only by those whose conative power is at a high ebb (E4p69).[38]

[38] See James, *Spinoza on Learning to Live Together*, Chapter 13, for discussion of *animositas* as a desire to maintain health.

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While Galenic terminology has largely disappeared from the *Ethics*, vestiges of Galenism remain, both in the notion that health and life rest on equilibrium, and in the notion that physical, mental, and moral health increase and decrease within a range or "latitude". Spinoza retains a vestige of the Galenic notion of temperament in *constituto,* the "constitution" of an individual's *conatus* which responds to the outside world and determines how to manifest its desires and actions there.[39] *Constituto* is, like temperament, the particular way a person's essence changes according to circumstances: Spinoza states that as each man is affected by external causes, "his nature is constituted one way or the other, [and] his desires vary". A man's essence "is conceived to be determined, by whatever constitution he has, to do something" (E3p56dem; C 1:527/G 2:185). In his famous letter to Balling of 1664, Spinoza remarks that an unhealthy constitution causes troubling dreams (Ep. 17; C 1:353/G 4:77–78). His comment that "those whose blood is thick imagine nothing but quarrels, troubles, killings, and things like these" echoes Galen's descriptions of the dreams and preoccupations typically associated with people of different temperaments. But while Galen and the Spinoza of the *Short Treatise* recommend a rebalancing of one's constituent elements to remedy this situation (perhaps through drinking wine), the Spinoza of the *Ethics* suggests that such physical treatments will only go so far. Strengthening our constitution requires the tenacity that comes with rational understanding of our own nature and the development of our freedom.

Spinoza's concept of the human lifeform at once reaches back to the medieval ideal of balance and forward to the modern ideal of free agency. The "journey" of Spinoza's *Ethics*—whereby we strive to become more active, rational, virtuous, and free—follows the trajectory of maintaining our health as we and our circumstances change. Maintaining health means preserving the balance or proportion of parts that is appropriate to our nature and that allows us to thrive within our circumstances. The Galenic notion of balance remains important to Spinoza's conception of a life well lived. But a good life requires more than this, and in the *Ethics* we see Spinoza on the point of turning away from this medieval ideal. Our aim is to achieve not mere equilibrium but maximum perfection, becoming as rational, virtuous, and free as we can. To fail to do so is to be a "grown up infant" whose blood circulates and whose parts have some ratio of motion and rest but who cannot be said to share in human nature (E4p39s). Galenism helps us to understand biology but it fails, metaphysically, to conceive of the essence of the living being as a power or drive to perfect itself. Spinoza's concept of the living human being therefore relies on an adherence to Galenism as an explanatory framework for living bodies, but also on a rejection of Galenism as an explanatory framework for human beings and what motivates them.

[39] For discussion, see Viljanen, *Spinoza's Geometry of Power*, pp. 151–152.

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PART V

THE SOCIO-POLITICAL RELEVANCE OF THE HUMAN LIFEFORM

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11

The Authority of Humanity. Human Living and Intellectual Friendship in Spinoza

Mogens Lærke

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Introduction

In a central passage of the TP, Spinoza proclaims that "the best state is one where men pass their lives harmoniously, I mean that they pass a *human* life, one defined not merely by the circulation of the blood, and other things common to all animals, but mostly by reason, the true virtue and life of the mind" (TP 5.5, C 2:530/G 3:296). The first characteristic of such a "human life", he explains, is a life of "peace", but not just peace in the sense "absence of war", but as "a virtue which arises from strength of mind" (TP 5.4, C 2:530/G 3:196 [translation modified]). It stems from "a constant will to do what must be done in accordance with the common decree of the commonwealth", for if it arises only from the subject's "lack of spirit", we are being "led like sheep, and know only to be slaves", and the state in which we live is "more properly called a wasteland than a commonwealth" (TP 5.4, C 2:530/G 3:196). Spinoza's views about peace and a human life here contrast strikingly with Hobbes's according to which "the nature of War, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is PEACE".[1] Peace then, Hobbes continues, "consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied . . . as is spoken of in the Books of the old Morall Philosophers", but comes about by the mere observation of proper "manners".[2] Clearly, when including "strength of mind" and "constant will" in the definition of peace, Spinoza projects a sharply different aspiration than Hobbes's, namely an aspiration to a peace which is not just external among the subjects who inhabit the commonwealth but which involves also an internal peace of mind for each of them, reminiscent of the conception of the highest good as *acquiescentia in se ipso* that we find in the *Ethics*.[3] Spinoza thus lays the groundwork for a distinction between, on

[1] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 13, in *Leviathan, Volume 2*, p. 192.
[2] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 11, in *Leviathan, Volume 2*, p. 150.
[3] For some recent studies of "rational self-contentment" (*acquiescentia in se ipso*), see Clare Carlisle, "Spinoza's *Acquiescentia*", pp. 209–236; Mogens Lærke, *Spinoza and the Freedom of Philosophizing*, pp. 101–104.

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the one hand, a merely negatively defined peace that excludes fighting and threat, and, on the other hand, a positively defined peace that allows citizens to moreover achieve the steadfast tranquillity that comes with a rational life.

It is principally this second kind of peace that I am interested in here. This is because, as I will argue, the passage from TP regarding the value and nature of living a "human life" converges with Spinoza's positive ideal of a peaceful society and with the notion of a communal life in which we achieve internal peace of mind *through our interaction with others*, by learning and taking advice from those among whom we live, while in turn offering teaching and advice to them. A "human life" stems from the relations of intellectual friendship that we entertain with one another within a sphere of sociability that may be more or less restricted, protected, and supported by the state, but that, in any case, it is in our nature as human beings to create for ourselves. This is the fundamental argument of Spinoza when, in TTP, Chapter 20, he sets out to defend what he calls the *libertas philosophandi*: it is to offer an argument why it is in the state's own interest to nurture and protect such a public sphere of friendly sociability. The present chapter delves deeper into these communal structures which condition the flourishing of "a human life". I want to stress in particular the central importance for Spinoza's social and political project of a particular kind of authority, namely what, in TTP 11, he calls the "authority to teach and advise", a private authority that belongs to citizens as a matter of natural right, and that Spinoza contrasts with the public authority which these same citizens are also subjected to as a matter of civil law. The reason why I focus on that particular kind of private authority to teach and advise is that, contrary to other forms of authority in Spinoza, it is inextricably tied to the notion of *humanitas*: it is an authority that human beings have in virtue of their humanity and an authority of which they cannot be deprived except by being deprived of their humanity. Moreover, I will argue, it is also the authority which governs Spinoza's understanding of intellectual friendship.

I shall first consider how Spinoza employs the notion of humanity (*humanitas*) throughout his works. Next, I shall turn to his theory of authority (*authoritas/auctoritas*), focusing on the special kind of authority "to teach and advise" Spinoza associates with intellectual friendship. Finally, I show how this authority to teach and advise is tied up with Spinoza's conception of humanity as an authority which pertains to human beings by inalienable natural right in virtue of their humanity, and of which they cannot be deprived without being reduced to beasts, that is, without being deprived of their humanity. Throughout the analysis, I will stress the proximity between Spinoza's programme and that of Erasmian humanism.

11.1 Four Meanings of *Humanitas*

In Spinoza, the term *humanitas* refers to no less than four different things: (1) a general concept; (2) a moral quality; (3) a conversational virtue;

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(4) an intellectual tradition. These four meanings are tightly interconnected, but used for different purposes in different contexts of writing. I shall address them briefly in turn.

(1) While explaining Spinoza's opinions regarding the nature of the will as opposed to those of Descartes, Lodewijk Meijer attributes to Spinoza the view that "humanity" (*humanitas*) must be numbered "among those notions which men have formed because they conceive things abstractly", while still distinguishing such notions from "fictions" (PPC Preface, C 1:230/G 1:132). The passage can be read in conjunction with Spinoza's first letter to Oldenburg: "So it is as impossible to conceive that the will is the cause of this or that volition as to conceive that humanity is the cause of Peter and Paul" (Ep. 2, C 1:168/G 4:9). In both instances, *humanitas* refers to a kind of general or universal concept. Spinoza, however, does not use the abstract term *humanitas* frequently in this way, preferring instead to convey this same universal concept by the concrete term *homo* (often translated as "man", including by Curley, but in most instances more fittingly rendered as "human being") or by speaking of *natura humanae*, that is "human nature".[4] The exact epistemic and ontological status of "human nature" in Spinoza is a much-discussed issue among those commentators who have taken a general interest in his theory of essence or a more specific interest in the so-called "model of human nature", introduced in the Preface to Part Four (E4pref, C 1: 545/G 2:208). It would go far beyond the scope of this chapter to engage adequately with these discussions, so I will simply clarify the aspects of my own view that are relevant for the present purposes. As I see it, when taken in this sense, as a general conception of "human nature", *humanitas, homo* or *natura humanae* all refer to what Spinoza in the *Ethics* calls the "true definition of man [*vera hominis definitio*]" or "human nature in general [*natura humana in genere*]" (E1p8s2, C 1:415/G 2:51). He does not believe that such a true definition expresses a general essence in any strong realist sense. All that exists are singular essences of singular human beings. However, one can offer a true definition of human nature which expresses properties common to all those singular essences, or what Spinoza also calls a "common notion" of man. Common notions are a certain kind of general adequate concept that we form when our mind "regards a number of things at once, . . . understand[s] their agreements, differences,

[4] I have not modified Curley's translation on this point, but it is important to remember that "man" (*homo*) and "humanity" (*humanitas*) are cognate terms. It is also important to realize that no gender is implied by the Latin term *homo*. The gendered term for "man" is *vir*. The Dutch translation of Spinoza in the *Nagelate Schriften* gives the *homo* as "mensch", that is, a "human" or a "human being".

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and oppositions"[5] (E2p29s, C 1:471/G 2:114). Spinoza opposes them to those inadequate general concepts he describes as "universal" and "transcendental", which are grounded in properties ultimately ascribed to things only by our imagination.[6] Common notions, by contrast, are grounded in real properties of things whose real similarities and differences are sorted out by reasoning. They are, therefore, adequate.

(2) In a second sense, *humanitas* refers to a set of mostly moral qualities pertaining to human beings of which Spinoza offers a systematic account in Part Three of *Ethics*. *Humanitas* is not separately treated as an affect within the deductive framework of Spinoza's treatise. However, after demonstrating in E3p29 that "we strive to do . . . whatever we imagine men to look on with joy", he adds in the associated scholium that "human kindness" (*humanitas*) is a species of "striving to do something (and also to omit doing something) solely to please men" (E3p29s, C 1:510/G 2:162–163). Spinoza moreover identifies it with "courtesy" (*modestia*) which is a species of "nobility" (*generositas*), which are affects that motivate actions aiming at another's advantage.[7] This same connection also transpires from the definition of *humanitas* offered in the Definitions of the Affects in the end of Part Three: "Human kindness, or courtesy [*humanitas seu modestia*], is a desire to do what pleases men and not do what displeases them" (E3daXLIII, C 1:541/G 2:202). *Humanitas* is, thus, an essentially social impulse, oriented toward mutual assistance and communal living. Part Four moreover proceeds to systematically link such *humanitas* to a communal life lived according to the dictates of reason: "he who strives from reason to guide others acts not by impulse, but kindly, generously [*humaniter et benigne*], and with the greatest steadfastness of mind" (E4p37s1, C 1:565/G2:439).

(3) The third meaning of *humanitas*, often given by Curley as "kindness", is a polite, conversational use which represents the majority of occurrences of the term in Spinoza's works. It shows up frequently in the correspondence, in letters he receives as well as letters he sends. Hence, in the very first letter of Spinoza's published correspondence, Oldenburg sings the praise of the "kindness and graciousness" (*humanitas, & morus elegantia)* that become an "honourable man, educated as becomes a free man [*viros . . . ingenuos, & liberaliter educatos*]" (Ep. 1, C 1:163/G 4:4–5). In response, Spinoza cites the pleasures of shared friendship that he attributes to Oldenburg's *humanitas*.[8] Writing to Spinoza in 1663, Lodewijk Meijer thanks him for the *humanitas*

[5] This form of adequate knowledge concerns only the second kind, common notions, and not intuitive knowledge which is knowledge of "essences" and "singular things", not of "a number of things at once" (E2p40s2, C 1:478/G 2:123, and E5p36s, C 1:613/G 2: 303).

[6] E2p40s1, C 1:476-77/G 2:121.

[7] E3p59s, C 1:530/G 2:189.

[8] Ep. 2, C 1:164–165/G 4:7.

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he has always shown him.[9] In Letter 11, Oldenburg reports that Boyle has received Spinoza's comments on his "little Chemical-Physical Treatise" with his usual *humanitas* (C 2:197/G 4:498), and in Letter 29, in return, vows on Boyle's part to repay Spinoza's "kindness and affection" (*humanitas et affectus*) (C 2:10/G 4:164). Writing to Schuller in 1674, Spinoza praises Schuller's "singular kindness" (*singularis humanitas*) (Ep. 58, C 2:427/G 4:265). Schuller, in turn, appeals to Spinoza's *humanitas* when making excuses for a late response.[10] Tschirnhaus asks Spinoza to instruct him with regard to some objections to the *Ethics* with his usual *humanitas*;[11] and again, via Schuller, Tschirnhaus requests permission from Spinoza to divulge his manuscript of the *Ethics* to Leibniz, appealing to his generous *humanitas*.[12] Oldenburg, in turn, explains the brevity of a letter by the fact that he has friends to entertain whom he will not deny the "duties of politeness" (*officia humanitatis*) (Ep. 74, C 2:470/G 4:311), and so on.

(4) It would, of course, be a mistake to bestow any precise conceptual value upon these polite, conversational uses of the term *humanitas*. They do, however, point to a shared intellectual culture among Spinoza and his interlocutors, indeed a general culture of the seventeenth-century republic of letters as a whole, which resonates importantly also in passages where Spinoza does in fact deploy the term in a more systematic context. And what is perhaps most striking about all these conversational uses of the notion of *humanitas*—whether the term is understood in a deeper sense of kindness or merely as polite courtesy—is the frequency with which they occur in conjunction with pledges of "friendship" (*amicitia*). Through this association, the polite use of the term *humanitas* connects the double systematic construct of *humanitas*—as a universal and as a moral quality—to yet a fourth understanding of the term, indicative of an intellectual tradition, namely Erasmian humanism. In Erasmus, the conception of *humanitas* is embedded in an ethics of intellectual friendship that plays out in the relations among what was generally described as persons of "liberal mentality". This expression, drawn from Terence's *Adelphoe*,[13] had come to encompass a whole set of virtues of friendship, including generosity, frankness, and sincerity. A 1625 Latin–French dictionary thus translates the Latin *liberale ingenium* by "a forthright courage and good nature [*un franc courage, & bonne nature*]";[14] a French–Latin dictionary from 1635 offers *liberale*

[9] Ep. 12, C 1:201/G 4:52.
[10] Ep. 63, C 2:436/G 4:274.
[11] Ep. 65, C 2:440/G 4:279.
[12] Ep. 70, C 2:463/G 4:303.
[13] See Terence, *Adelphoe*, Act 6, Scene 5, in *Comoediæ sex*, p. 140: "By Hercules I believe you; for I know you to be of liberal mentality [*Credo hercle; nam ingenium novi tuum Liberale*]."
[14] Jean Nicot, *Le Grand Dictionaire François-Latin augmenté*, p. 332.

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ingenium as one among other possible Latin translations of "candor, frank nature, sincerity [*candeur, franchise de nature, sincerité*]".[15] The *Dictionary* of Thomas Eliot of 1538 gives *liberale ingenium* as "free courage".[16] Spinoza himself employs this expression twice, once in the TTP when he praises those "who have a liberal mentality [*quia liberalis ingeniii sunt*]" (TTP 20, C 2:350/G 3:245 [translation modified]),[17] and then again in his correspondence with Hermann Schuller, in a passage where he recalls his earlier interactions with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz who "seemed to [him] to be a man with a liberal mentality [*homo liberalis ingenii*], and well-versed in every science" (Ep. 72, C 2:466/G 4:305).[18] *Humanitas* is the name that both Spinoza and many of his correspondents give to the affective economy governing the friendly interaction among such "men of liberal mentality".

11.2 Authority: Public, Prophetic, Private

I have elsewhere offered a relatively systematic exposition of the various forms of authority at work in Spinoza's theological politics.[19] In order to grasp the principles and powers that govern friendly exchanges among persons of "liberal mentality", we must attempt to situate them within this general framework of authority, for reasons that will become evident. The forms of authority that are of interest to us here are *public*, *prophetic*, and, most importantly, *private* authority.

Public authority is associated with the unity of sovereign power. For example, the Hebrew Republic required "a certain public authority" to uphold Mosaic law, because "if each person had the freedom to interpret the public legislation according to his own will, no republic could survive" (TTP 7, C 2:190/G 3:116). To the extent that it involves no use of one's own judgement, no rational

[15] Philibert Monet, *Inventaire des deus langues, françoise, et latine*, p. 164.
[16] Thomas Elyot, *The Dictionary of syr Thomas Elyot knight* [Addicion, unpaginated].
[17] Curley has "a mind worthy of a free man" for *liberale ingenium*.
[18] See also Akkerman, "La pénurie de mots", in *Lire et traduire Spinoza*, p. 14.
[19] Lærke, *Spinoza and the Freedom of Philosophizing*, pp. 67–94. Authority should, in this context, always be understood to translate either *authoritas* (from the Greek *αὐτός*, *autor*, of oneself) or *auctoritas* (from the Latin *auctor*, originator, and *augere*, to augment). Spinoza offers no definition of either term. Although attempts exist, it is not clear to me that we should distinguish systematically between them (cf. Estop, "Beyond Legitimacy: The State as an Imaginary Entity in Spinoza's Political Ontology", pp. 87–112, esp. pp. 88–90). *Authoritas* is Spinoza's preferred term in the TTP where it is used in both religious/exegetical and political contexts. *Auctoritas* is the term he employs in the TP, and here exclusively in a political context, in clear and constant dialogue with the texts and terminology of classical Republican theory, Cicero in particular. The *Ethics* contains only a single occurrence of *auctoritas*, in the appendix of the first part, in a passage concerned with the relation between ignorance and abusive religious authority (E1app, C 1:144/G 2:81). Some English-language commentary on Spinoza will also use the term "authority" to render the intractable term *imperium*. Moreover, a substantial amount of Spinoza literature considers a reconstructed distinction between *potentia* and *potestas* essential for making sense of the political theories in the TTP and the TP, and often renders that distinction by translating *potentia* as "power" and *potestas* as "authority". Those are not conceptions of "authority" that I will engage with here.

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self-determination, and no intellectual exchange, respecting public authority involves no use of any "liberal mentality". It consists in obedience only, that is, "in someone's carrying out a command solely on the authority of the person who commands it" (TTP 5, C 2:144/G 3:74). Ultimately, public authority belongs to the sovereign power alone. For subjects, it does, however, include the possibility of a derivative authority emanating from a sovereign delegating the exercise of power, such as that of civil servants in charge of "look[ing] after the whole administration of the state, as deputies of the king" (TP 8.3, C 2:566/G 3:325).[20]

In opposition to public authority, Spinoza formulates a form of authority that he associates with private persons, private men, and private right. The difference between them lies in the form of authorization they involve: What is said or done with public authority is authorized by the sovereign power; what is said or done with private authority is authorized by the speakers or agents themselves. Spinoza gives as an example of the latter the early Christian missions of the Apostles and the primitive Church. These men, he argues, did not seek the permission of the civil authorities but taught the Christian religion as

> private men who were accustomed for a long time—against the will of those who had sovereignty and whose subjects they were—to address meetings in private Churches, to establish and administer sacred offices, to manage everything by themselves, and to make decrees without any concern for the sovereign. (TTP 19, C 2:342/G 3:237)

Contrary to the Hebrew prophets, whose religious doctrine was aligned with the interests of the state and the destiny of a particular nation, the Apostles and early Christians were "called to preach to absolutely everyone and to convert everyone to religion" (TTP 11, C 2:244/G 3:154).[21] The Apostles and first Christians thus assumed a private authority to speak their minds and teach their religion everywhere.

In constructing the notion of this private authority, Spinoza relies on a distinction that Saint Paul makes in 1 Cor. 14:6 between two different styles of apostolic predication, namely predication "from revelation" (*ex revelatione*) and predication "from knowledge" (*ex cognitione*). Predication from revelation is what the Apostles were engaged in when preaching in public, as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles.[22] Predication from knowledge, by contrast, was what the Apostles do in

[20] For the notion of a "deputy" (*vicarius*), see TTP 19: C 2:339/G 3:234; TP 6.18, C 2:537/G 3:302. Spinoza also speaks of a "minister" (*minister*) of the state. See TTP 19, C 2:335/G 3:231; TP 4.3, C 2:526/G 3:292.

[21] Cf. 2 Tim. 1:11, quoted at TTP 11, C 2:246/G 3:156: "For this [Gospel] I have been appointed a preacher and an Apostle and a teacher of the nations." See also TTP 12, C 2:253/G 3:163: "before the coming of Christ the prophets were accustomed to preach religion as the law of their Country and by the power of the covenant entered into in the time of Moses; but after the coming of Christ the Apostles preached the same [religion] to everyone as a universal law, solely by the power of the passion of Christ".

[22] TTP 11, C 2:244/G 3:155; TTP 11, C 2:246/G 3:156.

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the Epistles, in private communications to the members of other Christian communities. In Chapter 11 of the TTP, Spinoza describes in considerable detail the latter kind of predication, explaining how, in their letters, the Apostles expressed themselves, not as prophets, but as private men, presenting their interpretation of the Gospel candidly to their fellow Christians, leaving it open to their scrutiny and evaluation. The Letters of the Apostles, Spinoza claims, "contain nothing but brotherly advice, mixed with a politeness which prophetic authority is completely opposed to" (TTP 11, C 2:243/G 3:153).

Now, when preaching in these two distinct styles—publicly from revelation and privately from knowledge—the Apostles did not claim to have the same kind of authority. When preaching publicly *ex revelatione*, their authorization came directly from Jesus Christ: "By what right could Christ's disciples, who were private men, preach religion? I say they did this by right of the power they'd received from Christ over unclean spirits" (TTP 19, C 2:338/G 3:233). In other words, the Apostles preached in public neither with public nor with private authority, but with *prophetic* authority. The first Christians of the primitive Church could not preach in this way because they were not prophets: "the authority Christ gave his disciples he gave to them only, and . . . others cannot take them as an example" (TTP 19, C 2:339/G 3:234). The Apostles, however, "were granted not only the power to prophesy, but also the authority to teach" (TTP 11, C 2:244/G 3:155); they "received not only the power to preach the story of Christ as prophets, confirming it with signs, but also the authority to teach and advise in the way each one judged best" (TTP 11, C 2:245–246/G 3:156). And this, Spinoza argues, is how the Apostles expressed themselves specifically in their letters: they spoke not as prophets but as "private persons, or teachers" (TTP 11, C 2:240/G 3:151). In this way, for example, Paul claimed for himself an "authority to advise whomever and whenever he wished . . . a freedom to advise, which was his as a teacher, and not as a prophet" (TTP 11, C 2:246/G 3:156).

Contrary to prophetic authority, this private authority did, however, not belong to the Apostles alone. Spinoza also attributes it to those who "first taught the Christian religion" as private men in their private churches (TTP 19, C 2:342/G 3:237). Does this imply that Spinoza extends an Apostolic *privilege*—that is, the authority to *teach* the Gospel—to include the early teachers of the Christian religion as well? Does it bring Spinoza closer to the veneration of the early church characteristic of the Reformed tradition? I think not. Rather, I believe, Spinoza intends to say that, when "teaching" the Gospel as private men, both the Apostles and the early teachers of Christianity exercised a common authority which belongs to *every human being qua human being*. When highlighting the private authority which is common to both Apostles and the first Christians, Spinoza is thus not making a theological point about the extension of religious authority in the Christian tradition. He is making a philosophical point about an authority that derives from human nature or from our *humanitas*. More precisely, he shows how the

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authority to teach and advise is a specifically human power, a natural right not tied to civil law but to an inalienable human aptitude to judge and express judgement, the exercise of which Spinoza exemplifies by the Epistles of the Apostles and by the private teachings of the first Christians, but which in fact belongs to *all* human beings qua human. To reach this conclusion, however, we must first take a brief detour to address a possible objection that regards the legitimacy of engaging in such teaching and advising. For it is in answering this objection that the argumentative force of Spinoza's appeal to common humanity becomes apparent.

11.3 Humanity's Right

The question is how Spinoza, given the premises of his own overall argument in the TTP, can consider legitimate such use of a private authority for *any* kind of predication. The question arises because Spinoza also strongly condemns private citizens who authorize themselves to interfere with sovereign judgement under the banner of religion when he argues that "everything will deteriorate . . . if private men are prepared to defend divine right seditiously" (TTP 19, C 2:341/G 3:236). Indeed, the only private right that Spinoza explicitly articulates is a *jus civile privatum* defined as "the freedom each person has to preserve himself in his state, which is determined by the edicts of the supreme power, and is defended only by its authority" (TTP 16, C 2:290/G 3:196). The private authority that the Apostles and the first Christians assumed for themselves, however, clearly transgressed those civil perimeters of private right because they were "making decrees without any concern for the sovereign" in "private churches". So how come Spinoza does not see *them* as being engaged in "defending divine right seditiously"?

One possible, but I think ultimately untenable, explanation would point to Spinoza's use of the common distinction between internal faith and external government. Religion, he says, is concerned with internal virtues that "consist not so much in external actions as in simplicity and truthfulness". These virtues, he continues, are "not the domain of any public legislation or public authority" (TTP 7, C 2:191/G 3:116 [translation modified]). Indeed, "each person is his own master with respect to the internal worship of God and piety itself" (TTP 19, C 2:333/G 3:229); "each person must be allowed freedom of judgment and the power to interpret the foundations of faith according to his own mentality" (TTP Preface, C 2:73/G 3:11); and "each person will . . . have the supreme right and the supreme authority to judge freely concerning religion, and hence to explain it and interpret it for himself" (TTP 7, C 2:101/G 3:117). Referring to this distinction, one could then argue that the authority exercised by the Apostles and first Christians in their private churches did not interfere with the exercise of public authority because their teachings related only to matters of internal conscience which de facto do not fall under public authority. The solution would broadly align with Hobbes's

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when the English philosopher argues that "internall faith is in its own nature invisible, and consequently exempted from all humane jurisdiction",[23] whereas external profession of faith is merely a mechanical action of the body performed on the sovereign's command: "Profession with the tongue is but an externall thing, and no more than any other gesture whereby we signifie our obedience."[24] When Spinoza affirms that "each person is his own master with respect to the internal worship of God and piety itself" (TTP 19, C 2:333/G 3:229), and distinguishes between preaching in public and teaching in private, it is certainly tempting to interpret his conception of the authority to teach and advise along the lines of such a distinction between public profession and private faith.

It is, however, a temptation one should resist. For, contrary to Hobbes, Spinoza does not believe that it is possible to effectively separate the two domains. First, his virulent critique of how theologians manipulate the religious imagination of people amply demonstrates that external control of internal faith is not in fact impossible, and that the domain of individual conscience is far from being an inviolable sanctuary.[25] And conversely, it is also the case that faith never confines itself to the internal domain of the individual conscience but constantly spills over into the external, public domain. For, if it is true that no one will "stop men from making their own judgment about everything according to their own mentality", it is equally true that such judgement will always be accompanied by external profession because, he claims, "not even the wisest know how to keep quiet, not to mention ordinary people" (TTP 20, G 2:345/G 3:240).

Spinoza's evidence for the point is not merely from experience. It is systematic. In the *Ethics*, he thus makes a similar point while arguing against a fictive adversary who maintains that "it is in the mind's power [*mentis potestate*] alone to speak and to be silent" (E3p2s, C 1:495/G 2:142). Certainly, in the immediate context of this passage, Spinoza appeals only to experience to make the argument: "experience teaches all too plainly that human beings have nothing less in their power than their tongue" (E3p2s, C 1:496/G 2:143 [translation modified]). In the broader context, however, the argument serves to illustrate a metaphysical point, namely, that the (internal) actions of the mind are necessarily correlated with the (external) actions of the body, which is why any mental judgement is always metaphysically correlated with some external expression of that judgement.[26] Since nothing can stop human beings from making their own judgement, nothing can stop them from expressing it either in some form or other. It is impossible for human beings not to speak their minds. This does not imply, of course, that they always do so freely and straightforwardly. Human beings can be alienated from their free judgement

[23] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 42, in *Leviathan, Volume 3*, p. 822.
[24] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 42, in *Leviathan, Volume 3*, p. 785.
[25] TTP 20, C 2:344/G 3:239.
[26] On this passage, see Pierre-François Moreau, *Spinoza. L'expérience et l'éternité*, pp. 370–375; Hasana Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics of Renaturalization*, pp. 46–47, 52.

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in many ways, or end up speaking a mind not really their own. It does not imply either that deception and dissimulation become impossible. While people will, on some level, always speak their minds, their minds may well be set on deception and their intent will accordingly receive a deceitful expression.[27] Still, there is no internal judgement that does not receive *some* external expression, because these are aspects, a mental and a corporeal one, of a single human action.[28] One cannot avoid conflict between private and public authority by confining the former to the internal domain of conscience and the latter to the external domain of action, because they constantly spill into one another. Consequently, referring to a distinction between internal faith and external profession will not suffice for legitimizing the private teachings by the Apostles and early Christians in the face of sovereign public authority because those teachings will constantly spill into public view.

Instead, we must seek a solution to the apparent conflict between public authority and the authority to teach and advise in the consideration of their distinct origin and quality. The principal point here is that the authority to teach and advise is not conceived in terms of a private *civil* right, but in terms of a private *natural* right. According to Chapter 16 of the TTP, civil law and civil right are ultimately grounded in public authority which in turn is grounded in the transfer of whatever natural rights we *can* hand over to a sovereign power, whatever such transfer means for Spinoza.[29] There are, however, certain inalienable natural rights that we cannot transfer, even in Spinoza's sense of it, lest the society thereby created be not a *human* one, namely such rights that it is not in the power of human beings qua human beings *not* to exercise. And prominently among those powers figures, as we have seen, our ability to speak our minds, or rather, our inability not to speak our minds. It is a power, or right, that is inalienable exactly because *it is not in our power to hold our tongues*. As such, human beings *always* authorize themselves to speak their minds because it is not in their nature to refrain from doing so. And it is in this inalienable power or right, not transferrable to any sovereign power because it is not in our human power to do so, that the authority to teach and advise is grounded.

It is of the essence to grasp in what, precisely, the impossibility of transfer here consists in and what it implies. Crucially, it does not mean that we cannot be *physically* prevented from exercising our authority to teach and advise. Indeed, this is exactly what occurs under a "violent rule", defined by its effort to control what people think and say through physical constraint and threat.[30] And Spinoza's point

[27] On prejudice and deception in Spinoza, see Lærke, *Spinoza and the Freedom of Philosophizing*, pp. 95–120; Mogens Lærke, "*Homo Politicus*. Spinoza, Oldenburger, and the Politics of Envy and Friendship", pp. 154–158.

[28] Sharp, *Spinoza and the Politics*, p. 43.

[29] TTP 16, C 2:284–292/G 3:191–197. I offer a reading of Spinoza's contract theory as a doctrine grounded in the imagination in *Spinoza and the Freedom of Philosophizing*, pp. 193–215.

[30] TTP 18, C 2:327/G 3:225; TTP 20, C 2:344/G 3:239; TTP 20, C 2:345–346/G 3:240; TTP 20, C 2:351/G 3:245.

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is neither that such violence cannot be effective, at least to some extent, nor that a sovereign power has no right to inflict it upon its subjects. After all, the right of a sovereign power is exactly equivalent to its power: "by right [the rulers] can consider as enemies anyone who doesn't think absolutely as they do in every matter and rule with the utmost violence" (TTP 20, C 2:345/G 3:240). A sovereign power has the right to do whatever it can. Spinoza offers no straightforwardly moral lessons condemning violent rule. Indeed, "if it were as easy to command men's minds as it is their tongues, every ruler would govern in safety and no rule would be violent. Everyone would live according to the mentality of the rulers" (TTP 20, C 2:344/G 3:239). Peace would be restored. What he does, however, is to highlight the price of obtaining peace by violence and the contradiction it involves, for it amounts to ruling human beings by suppressing exactly that in virtue of which they are human. By "completely preventing everyone from freely using his judgment and from distinguishing the true from the false", a violent sovereign power is *literally* "turn[ing] men from rational beings into beasts" (TTP Preface, C 2:70/G 3:8). Exercising violent rule dissolves *human* society. Moreover, and by the same token, when such a rule is inflicted upon human beings, it will encounter resistance by necessity, exactly because it seeks to take away from those human beings something they cannot relinquish without violating their own nature: "No one can so deprive himself of his power to defend himself that he ceases to be a man" (TTP Preface, C 2:74/G 3:12); "no one will ever be able to transfer to another his power, or consequently, his right, in such a way that he ceases to be a man" (TTP 17, C 2:296/G 3:201); "men endowed with reason never give up their right so much that they cease to be men and may be considered as no more than cattle" (TP 7.25, C 2:557/G 3:319). A violent regime is invariably perceived by subjects as unbearable because it is repugnant to their very nature. Ultimately, therefore, a violent ruler cannot stay in power because violence necessarily produces effects of resistance that end up undermining the ruler himself. And this is why, without ever compromising on the fundamental equation between power and right, Spinoza still maintains about violent rulers that "because they can't do these things without great danger to the whole state, we can also deny that they have the absolute power to do such things" (TTP 20, C 2:345/G 3:240). But it should be emphasized that, when writing that "the end of the republic . . . is not to change men from rational beings into beasts or automata" (TTP 20, C 2.349/G 3.241), Spinoza is not expressing some moral imperative but stating a demonstrable fact: it simply *cannot* consistently be the aim of any state to engage in violent suppression of people's inalienable right to speak their minds, that is, to authorize themselves to teach and advise their fellow citizens as well as the sovereign power. Violent rule can only occur in a state in which the sovereign power is alienated from its own self-interest, because such a rule, which attempts to deprive human subjects of their humanity, necessarily engenders the very human resistance that will eventually spell its own demise.

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11.4 Conclusion

In *The Metaphysics of Morals* of 1797, Kant speaks of a particular kind of right which is "internally mine" and "that belongs to everyone by nature, independently of any act that would establish a right". Only one such right exists, namely freedom, which is "the only original right belonging to every man by virtue of his humanity". However, under such freedom falls a number of "authorizations" which, according to Kant, "are not really distinct from it". They include "innate equality", the "quality of being [one's] own master (*sui iuris*)", "being beyond reproach (*iusti*)", and "being authorized to do to others anything that does not in itself diminish what is theirs". This last kind of action includes "communicating [one's] thoughts to [them], telling or promising them something, whether what [one] says is true and sincere or untrue and insincere".[31] On the analysis we have offered, the conception of an "authority to teach and advise" that Spinoza develops in the TTP is very close indeed to this innate right to communicate one's thoughts that Kant conceptualizes over a century later. It is a natural right that belongs to us in virtue of our human nature, and which includes an inalienable authority to speak our minds. When Spinoza declares, in the passage from the TP quoted in the introduction, that the best state is the one where people can "pass a human life", this then involves crucially that in such a state each and every citizen can exercise their natural "authority to advise whomever and whenever he wishes" (TTP 11, C 2:246/G 3:156). A truly human life is a communal life wherein members of the community engage in the kind of intellectual exchanges that Spinoza exemplifies in the TTP by the epistolary style of the Apostles.

Spinoza's understanding of the apostolic epistolary style, and in particular his association of Saint Paul's notion of predication *ex cognitione* to a common "authority to teach and advise", is highly original. Still, it does have clear resonances to humanist emulation of the classical virtues of intellectual friendship.[32] On Spinoza's reading, the apostolic letters epitomize the Ciceronian ideals of candour and friendship so dear to Erasmian humanism.[33] That such intellectual friendship is of outsized ethical importance for Spinoza is evident everywhere in his

[31] See Immanuel Kant, *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 393–394.

[32] In the *Paraphrases*, Erasmus argues that, in this verse, revelation "immediately discloses the secret message"; knowledge "eruditely explains matters that pertain to the apprehension of the faith"; prophecy "discloses hidden meanings"; and doctrine "explains something pertinent to good moral behavior" (Erasmus, *Paraphrases on the Epistles to the Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippans, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, p. 164). The analysis, with its appeal to "erudite explanation", contrasts starkly with Calvin who, while acknowledging that knowledge and doctrine belong to a different category than revelation and prophecy, still puts great effort into narrowing the divide, by holding that knowledge is in fact just a special kind of revelation: "we have said that prophesying does not consist of a simple and bare interpretation of Scripture, but includes also knowledge for applying it to present use—which is obtained only by revelation, and the special inspiration of God" (Calvin, *Commentary on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, p. 438).

[33] See M. Lærke, *Spinoza and the Freedom of Philosophizing*, pp. 53–66.

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writings: "I esteem none [of the things outside my power] more than being allowed the honor of entering into a pact of friendship with people who sincerely love the truth" (Ep. 18, C 1:357/G 4:86);[34] "it is especially useful to men to form associations, to bind themselves by those bonds most apt to make one people of them, and absolutely, to do those things which serve to strengthen friendships" (E4appXII, C 1:589/G 2:269);[35] one should "apply one's zeal to those things that help to bring men together in harmony and friendship" (E4appXIV, C 1:590/G 2:270).[36] These same ideals of friendly interaction among men of liberal mentality resonate throughout his constant appeals to *humanitas* in the correspondences. As for their distinctly Erasmian undertones, they transpire from a letter to Jarig Jelles: "All things", he writes, "are common among friends; the wise are friends of the gods; therefore, all things belong to the wise. In this way this very wise man made himself the richest of all, more by nobly scorning wealth than by greedily pursuing it" (Ep. 44, C 2:391/G 4:228–229).[37] The proverb is key: "All things are common among friends." Spinoza mistakenly attributes this saying to Thales of Miletus, but it does reflect a long classical heritage that includes Socrates, Euripides, Terence, Plato, Aristotle, Martial, and Plutarch. Cicero, Diogenes Laertius, and Aulus Gellius all point to Pythagoras as the original source.[38] Most importantly, however, it figures prominently among Erasmus's *Adages* of which it constitutes the very first.[39] This widely known Erasmian account of the adage is what most clearly resonates in Spinoza's appeal to it.[40]

The four meanings of *humanitas*, thus, all come together in a unified conception of "a human life" defined by particular forms of social interaction reminiscent of the Erasmian ideals of intellectual friendship and exemplified by the epistolary style of the Apostles. Those are the forms of interaction that transpire when Paul offers the Corinthians "advice as a man, who, by God's grace, is trustworthy";[41] or when he

[34] On Spinoza and friendship, see also Lagrée, *Spinoza et le débat religieux*, pp. 235–236; Lucash, "Spinoza on Friendship", pp. 305–317; Lærke, "*Homo Politicus*", pp. 159–162.

[35] Cf. E4appXXVI, C 1:592/G 2:273: "Apart from men we know no singular thing in nature whose mind we can enjoy, and which we can join to ourselves in friendship, or some kind of association."

[36] See also E5p10, C 1:602/G 2:288, where Spinoza explains how "the common wrongs of men" may "be warded off best by nobility", and extols "the good which follows from mutual friendship and common society".

[37] See also Ep. 2, C 1:165/G 4:7: "friends must share in all things, especially spiritual things".

[38] Desiderius Erasmus, *Adages*, I.i.1: "Amicorum communia omnia", pp. 29–30.

[39] This is the case from the 1508 edition onward. The proverb figures as no. 94 in the smaller 1500 Paris edition, the so-called *Collectanae*. For an interesting discussion, see Eden, " 'Between Friends All is Common': The Erasmian Adage and Tradition", pp. 405–419.

[40] The philosophical relations between Spinoza and the Erasmian tradition as a whole are understudied, partly because no evidence of direct reading exists. The second dialogue in the *Korte Verhandeling* stages a conversation between "Erasmus" and "Theophilus", but no specific relation to the Dutch humanist seems intended (KV *Second Dialogue*, G 1:31–34/C 1:76–79). Russ Leo has recently stressed the importance of Erasmus for Spinoza (Leo, "Spinoza's Calvin. Reformed Theology in the *Korte Verhandeling van God, de Mensch en deszelfs Welstand*", pp. 155–157). See also Lærke, "*Homo politicus*", pp. 159–165.

[41] 1 Cor. 7:25, cit. in TTP 11, C 2:241/G 3:151.

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writes to the Romans that he has "written a bit more boldly to you, brothers";[42] or indeed whenever he offers his advice to his fellow Christians in a non-dogmatic way: "For whoever would confirm his doctrines by reason thereby submits them to the discretionary judgment of anyone. This Paul seems to have done, because he reasons, saying (1 Corinthians 10:15) *I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say*" (TTP 11, C 2:241–2/G 3:152 [translation modified]). The authority to teach and advise that the Apostles claimed for themselves when engaging in such frank interaction with their friends was not, however, an authority in any way tied in with their specific apostolic mission. Indeed, they acted not as Apostles but as human beings, that is, they expressed their *humanitas* in doing something that it is in any human being's nature to do, and that no human being can be prevented from doing lest their life be "defined . . . merely by the circulation of the blood, and other things common to all animals" (TP 5.5, C 2: 530/G 3:296).

[42] Rom. 15:15, cit. in TTP 11, C 2:243/G 333:153.

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12

Spinoza's Conception of Law from a Human Perspective

Philip Waldner

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12.1 The Problem

In the fourth chapter of the TTP,[1] which is programmatically entitled "Of the Divine Law", Spinoza gives the following definition of law:

> The word *law*, taken without qualification, means that according to which each individual, or all or some members of the same species, act in one and the same fixed and determinate way. This depends either on a necessity of nature or on human decision. A law which depends on a necessity of nature is one which follows necessarily from the very nature *or* definition of a thing. One which depends on a human decision, and which is more properly called legislation, is one which men prescribe for themselves and others, for the sake of living more safely and conveniently, or for some other causes. (TTP 4, C 2:125/G 3:57, emphasis in the original)

In this passage, remarkably, Spinoza not only provides a definition of laws (by describing them as something according to which things behave in a certain manner, but also immediately distinguishes between two types of law: there are laws that depend on the "necessity of nature", meaning that a thing acts in a certain way because it is in its nature to do so (henceforth "type I laws"), and there are laws that depend on "human decision", which means that these laws are made by men and, as such, are subject to change and revision (henceforth "type II laws").[2] Spinoza discerns these two types of law according to the distinction between descriptive and normative predicates: type I laws are descriptive in the sense that, if you know the necessary order of nature, you understand the laws that govern

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[2] I am carrying over the terminology of type I and II laws from Donald Rutherford, "Spinoza's Conception of Law: Metaphysics and Ethics", p. 144.

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the world and your actions within it. Type II laws, on the other hand, are normative: they tell you that you *should* behave in a certain way for the sake of achieving a certain goal.

The question then arises: how does Spinoza think those two types of law are connected? Does he think that either one can be reduced to the other, and if so in which way? The answer is far from clear. Spinoza states that "without reservation [. . .] everything is determined by the universal laws of nature to exist and produce effects in a fixed and determinate way" (TTP 4, G 3:58/C 2:126). This suggests that, at the end of the day, type II laws either boil down to purely descriptive natural laws (a position to which I am going to refer as "reductionism"), or even could be eliminated altogether (a position to which I am going to refer as "eliminativism"). In this chapter, I am going to argue against the eliminativist interpretation, and, furthermore, I will voice some reservations against the reductionist reconstruction. My aim, though, is not ultimately to deny that Spinoza opts for some sort of *metaphysical* reductionism, but to argue that, on his account, this reductionism needs to be complemented by an appeal to a notion of *practical* irreducibility.

I will proceed as follows: After a brief look at textual issues, I connect the eliminativist/reductionist queries I have mentioned with the ongoing discussion about whether (or to what degree) Spinoza accepts teleology. Next, I deal with the eliminativist challenge in more detail by revisiting Bennett's argument against teleology in Spinoza. My aim is to show that, contrary to Bennett's interpretation, positing type II laws does not lead to a contradiction, because Spinoza is not committed to extrinsic mental representation as an eliminativist line of reasoning maintains. Finally, I deal with the reductionist challenge by appealing to the practical indispensability of teleological explanations for human beings.

12.2 Textual Issues

At first glance, it looks rather unlikely that an anti-eliminativist approach has any basis in the text. Spinoza initially grants that everything is determined by type I laws, which are destined to be "metaphysically basic"[3] and, consequently, the issue of whether or not Spinoza is a reductionist does not even seem to come up. Metaphysically speaking, type I laws are the only real principles and therefore must include type II laws. Consider, however, how, in the passage following the quote in the previous section, Spinoza further elaborates on the distinction between the two types of law. Having established what type I laws are, Spinoza comes to specify what it means that laws depend on the decisions of men (i.e., type II laws). He discerns two reasons for positing such laws:

[3] Rutherford, "Conception of Law", p. 148.

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> insofar as man is a part of nature, he constitutes part of the power of nature. So the things which follow from the necessity of human nature—i.e., from nature itself insofar as we conceive it to be determinate through human nature—still follow, even though by necessity, from human power. (TTP 4, C 2:126/G 3:58)

Spinoza's point here is pretty straightforward and seems to confirm the case of reductionists: everything is determined by the necessary laws of nature. Therefore, insofar as humans are part of this nature, all they do must happen according to nature as well.

A few lines later, however, Spinoza continues by stating that these laws depend on a decision of men:

> [. . .] because we ought to define and explain things through their proximate causes. That universal consideration concerning fate and the connection of causes cannot help us to form and order our thoughts concerning particular things. Furthermore, we are completely ignorant of the order and connection of things itself, i.e., of how things are really ordered and connected. *So for practical purposes it is better, indeed necessary, to consider things as possible.* (TTP 4, C 2:126/G 3:58, my emphasis)

This passage is quite surprising as Spinoza abruptly shifts his perspective. Instead of relying on the necessary order of nature, which, ultimately, determines human actions, Spinoza concedes that knowing this on a universal level "cannot help us to form and order our thoughts concerning particular things". This is not to undermine the previously mentioned reductionist point; instead, Spinoza shows how things look from the position of finite subjects, who do not have knowledge of the complete connection of causes at their disposal. It is not just that they do not know how things are going to be determined, but, what is more, despite their lack of understanding, they are time and again involved in situations in which they have to act. It seems as if the necessity to act trumps metaphysical considerations here—if not across the board, at least from the stance of finite agents. This is confirmed by Spinoza's insistence that, for practical purposes, it is necessary to "consider things as possible". Hence, by shifting the focus from a general metaphysical claim to the practical matters of finite beings, Spinoza points to another problem: the question is not solely whether the world is governed by necessary laws of nature, but whether humans—as fundamentally social beings—must not consider things as possible in order to coordinate themselves politically.

Another point bears mentioning here. Spinoza concludes these remarks on the nature and kind of laws by stating that "the word *law* seems to be applied figuratively to natural things", whereas laws can "more particularly" be defined as "a principle of living man prescribes to himself or others for some end" (TTP 4, C 2:126–127/G 3:58, emphasis original). This has led to some debate about the significance of

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Spinoza's general definition of law: what does it entail for his view that, *in its proper sense*, the word 'law' characterizes type II laws, whereas it applies only *metaphorically* to type I laws? Edwin Curley has argued that Spinoza's initial definition is just "provisional" and that Spinoza's preferred definition is that in terms of type II laws, namely the definition that describes laws as human prescriptions for some end.[4] Against Curley, Jon Miller has opted for the view that type I and II laws constitute two different types of domains for one and the same basic definition, these two domains consisting of infinite and finite modes, respectively.[5] I tend to follow Curley's view. At least intuitively, it makes sense to draw a categorical distinction between laws that can be disregarded and laws that must be followed (e.g., natural laws); differentiating between two different domains will not do the job here, because it seems to be the *intension* of the concept and not its *extension* that separates type I from type II laws. As a final point in favour of Curley's reading, I would like to point to passages where Spinoza, far from simply observing that *philosophers* use the term 'law' as a metaphor, refers to his own usage of the word.[6]

We can conclude this section by underlining that even though Spinoza starts with the notion that everything is determined by type I laws, he continues by stressing the uniqueness of type II laws. This seems far from accidental, but, presumably, has to do with a shift in perspective: despite the overall metaphysical framework, Spinoza seeks to reserve the term 'law' for practical contexts, where—due to the limitations deriving from the human perspective—we do not know what is going to happen and yet are in need of guidelines to orient ourselves when acting. The hypothesis is that, at least at this point, when talking (although not theorizing) about laws in a common-sense manner, Spinoza's approach is such as to take the human viewpoint seriously, insofar as it sets constraints on our conceptual schemes. The question remains, though, whether this notion of law is not simply an improper manner of speaking which we should at least try to overcome on Spinoza's view. Or, is there perhaps yet another reason for Spinoza's sticking with the notion of type II laws?

12.3 A Look at Eliminative Materialism and the Issue of Teleology

In the past section, I provided some textual evidence that puts pressure on the reductionist reading. In this section, I extend the discussion of the supposed reducibility of type II to type I laws by comparing it with contemporary discussion in

[4] See Curley, "The State of Nature and its Law in Hobbes and Spinoza", pp. 108–109.

[5] See Miller, "Spinoza and the Concept of a Law of Nature", p. 264. See also Rutherford, "Conception of Law", p. 145 (n. 9).

[6] See TTP 16, C 2:292/G 3:198 (n.21 [ADN. XXXIV]): "I've called law in the same sense philosophers call laws the common rules of nature, according to which all things happen." See also Curley, "State of Nature", p. 117 (n. 30).

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philosophy of mind. Before doing so, however, it is worth contrasting the main features of these two types in schematic form.

Type I laws	**Type II laws**
Descriptive (no normative content)	Prescriptive (normative content)
Unchangeable	Changeable
Mechanical causation	Teleological causation

As this table exhibits, among the properties of the two types of laws juxtaposed here are some features that concern very deep metaphysical issues, such as the notions of change or the difference between two types of causation. In the following, I shall pay particular attention to the latter point: the opposition between teleological and non-teleological causation. There has been a thorough discussion as to whether (and to what degree) Spinoza accepts teleology,[7] but this question has never been raised in relation to eliminative or reductionist issues concerning types of law, and this although there is an obvious connection: if it turns out that Spinoza does not allow for teleology at all, then type II laws could be eliminated. On the other hand, if we can vindicate teleological explanations with a certain legitimacy in Spinoza's philosophy, we cannot eliminate type II laws.

With this in mind, we can now take a look at the arguments of eliminative materialism, which plays a major role in contemporary philosophy of mind. The claim of eliminative materialists is that various mental states that we take for granted in our everyday understanding (desires, beliefs, etc.) do not actually exist, but are part of a "Folk Psychology" that gets overturned by a mature science of the mind.[8] This position which calls itself "eliminative materialism" (or "eliminativism" for short) takes two different directions, corresponding with the conditions under which mental concepts are taken to be eliminable: first, one can argue that mental terms will simply turn out to be empty, akin to "demons" or "crystal spheres" which we no longer take to designate something real.[9] Second, one can argue that due to the ongoing achievements of neuroscience, we will be able to replace the framework of common-sense mental concepts with a more accurate, scientific framework.[10] While both versions consider the mental concepts currently in use as flawed and in need of revision, there is a difference insofar as the former takes our folk-psychological notions to signify nothing at all, whereas, for the latter, they *do* signify something, namely states of the brain. To clarify this by some labelling: one

[7] This discussion took off in the wake of Jonathan Bennett's influential study; see notes 10 and 11.

[8] See the programmatic works of Stich, *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science* and Churchland, *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind/Brain*.

[9] See Churchland, *Neurophilosophy*, p. 398.

[10] For distinguishing these two tendencies, see Ramsey, "Eliminative Materialism".

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could name the first position 'eliminativism' *tout court*. As an eliminativist, you deny mental concepts any meaning, and thereby also deny the existence of mental states. The second position by contrast is best labelled as a materialist reductionism: if you opt for this position, you still allow for mental talk to have certain meaning, while you also claim that, at the end of the day, the reference of this talk is just brain states.

A similar division can also be observed in the discussion of whether Spinoza allows final causes within his mechanistic view of nature. It was Jonathan Bennett who famously denied this possibility outright. According to Bennett, Spinoza's theory offers a "radical attack on teleology" by "trying to develop a nonteleological theory of human motivation".[11] This attitude is mainly a result of Bennett's reading of the *Appendix* to Part One of the *Ethics*, which, according to him, shows that Spinoza denies all final causes.[12] In this appendix, Spinoza indeed states that "Nature has no end set before it, and that all final causes are nothing but human fictions" (E1app; C 1:442/G 2:80). However, Edwin Curley has suggested that this passage can also be read such that Nature *as a whole* has no end set before it, which leaves the possibility for *humans* to act according to ends.[13] This reading gets textual support from the fact that Spinoza himself grants in the *Appendix* that "[a]ll the prejudices I here undertake to expose depend on this one: that men commonly suppose that all natural things act, *as men do*, on account of an end" (E1app; C 1:439/G 2:78, my emphasis). On this reading, Spinoza's concern is not teleology as such, but the assumption that humans, who by their nature act according to ends, illegitimately project these ends onto God or Nature.

This second reading is more in tune with the general gist of the *Appendix*, which is to expose human prejudices concerning nature rather than questioning human purposiveness as such. Nevertheless, there is textual evidence for both views. In the next section, I shall therefore try to settle this dispute by taking a closer look at Bennett's argument, which is concerned with the more particular problem of how representational properties of mental content can be causally efficacious.

[11] Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics*, p. 215.

[12] Against Bennett, see Curley, "On Bennett's Spinoza: The Issue of Teleology", pp. 39–52, Garrett, "Teleological Explanation in Spinoza and Early Modern Rationalism", pp. 310–335, Lin, "Teleology and Human Action in Spinoza", pp. 317–354, Schmid, *Finalursachen in der frühen Neuzeit. Eine Untersuchung der Tranformation teleologischer Erklärungen*, Steinberg, "Spinoza on Human Purposiveness and Mental Causation", pp. 51–70, Hoffman, "Final Causation in Spinoza", pp. 40–50, and Andrea Sangiacomo, "Aristotle, Heereboord, and the Polemical Target of Spinoza's Critique of Final Causes", pp. 395–420. In favour of Bennett's anti-teleological reading, see Carriero, "Spinoza on Final Causality", pp. 105–147.

[13] See Curley, "Bennett's Spinoza", p. 40.

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12.4 Bennett's Argument

The argument by which Bennett defends his eliminativist position consists of the following six steps:[14]

1. The causal powers of bodies depend exclusively on "*intrinsic*"[15] properties such as size, shape, and motion.
2. There is a parallelism between bodies and their properties and relations, on the one hand, and ideas and their properties and relations on the other. (See E2p7[16])
3. The causal powers of ideas depend exclusively on intrinsic properties. (Following from 1 and 2)
4. The representational properties of ideas depend upon their causal history. (See E2p16dem and E2p16c1)[17]
5. Causal history is an extrinsic property.
6. Therefore, the causal powers of ideas do not depend upon their representational properties. (Following from 3, 4, and 5)

The aim of this argument is to show that final causes (which rely on representational properties) do not contribute anything at all to the causal powers of ideas. It amounts to an eliminativist position, as it suggests that we can get rid of final causes entirely. At the bottom is the conviction that certain mental states turn out to be causally superfluous due to their representative nature. In the following, I first discuss two main strategies to deal with this argument, before I argue why both these strategies do not go far enough and are in need of some refinement.

The first strategy is to challenge step 3; this has been employed in different variations by Martin Lin and Stephan Schmid,[18] who both argue that the causal

[14] I am following the reconstruction of Bennett's argument as presented by Martin Lin and modified by Justin Steinberg; see Lin, "Human Action", p. 330, and Steinberg, "Human Purposiveness", pp. 54–55. For a more condensed reconstruction, see Schmid, *Finalursachen*, pp. 243–244.

[15] By referring to "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" properties, I am adopting the terminology of Bennett, *Study* and "Spinoza and Teleology: A Reply to Curley", as well as of the debate that ensued concerning his claims about final causes. For a critique of this framework altogether, see Schmid, *Finalursachen*, p. 246.

[16] This is a reformulation of Spinoza's famous "parallelism" doctrine, which states that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things", see E2p7, C 1:451/G 2:89.

[17] An important implication of Spinoza's theory of the imagination is that the idea of an external body affecting our body must involve the nature of that external body. This is why Spinoza can say that "the human mind perceives the nature of a great many bodies together with the nature of its own body" (E2p16c1; C 1:463/G 2:104). The claim of premise 4 in Bennett's argument that representational properties depend upon causal history means exactly what is said by p16 and corollary: the fact that I perceive footprints in the sand depends on the fact that the nature of the person walking there earlier is expressed (however vaguely) through my idea of the footprints.

[18] See Lin, "Human Action", and Schmid, *Finalursachen*. In what follows I will limit myself to Schmid's view. For a thorough analysis of Lin's view as well as problems connected with it, see Steinberg "Human Purposiveness", pp. 56–58.

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powers of ideas need not depend exclusively on *intrinsic* properties, but can also be a function of their *extrinsic* or representational properties. For example, Schmid argues that if we act based on adequate ideas, these actions are properly explained by efficient causation, without having to resort to final causes at all.[19] On Schmid's view, there is textual evidence suggesting that Spinoza would not have accepted Bennett's first premise (on which premise 3 rests) and instead assumed that the causal efficacy of physical properties has an extrinsic aspect to it.[20] This reconstruction is not without problems, as it reduces Spinoza's concept of teleological action to those actions that are the result of inadequate ideas. As I am going to argue in the next section, this is too restrictive a notion of action for Spinoza to have accepted.

The second strategy against Bennett relies on a distinction in Spinoza between one's having an idea A because A involves the nature of its cause and one's having an idea A because one actually apprehends A. Following Spinoza, there are in our minds ideas of many things constituted by both inadequate ideas (e.g., some features of our bodies) and adequate ones (e.g., the idea of God), of which we are not always aware. It therefore makes sense to distinguish between actually apprehending an idea and the mere conceivability of that idea.

This is where the second strategy comes in, which has been proposed in different versions by Justin Steinberg and Don Garrett.[21] The claim is that what needs to be accommodated is what the mind *actually* apprehends with causal efficacy, which also suggests that Spinoza has a dual conception of mental content. If this strategy is successful, then premise 4 of Bennett's argument fails, because only the *extrinsic* aspect of mental representation would depend upon causal history and not representation *tout court*.[22]

In a nutshell, the difference between the two strategies is that, according to the former, properties do not need to be intrinsic in order to be causally efficacious, whereas the latter requires that properties have to be intrinsic in order to be causally efficacious, but argues that representational properties can feature in this class of property. While these two approaches may not be compatible with each other, both have some merit in countering the eliminativist challenge posed by Bennett. There is no need to attribute the view to Spinoza that takes representational content to have no causal efficiency at all.

[19] See Schmid, *Finalursachen*, pp. 245–246.

[20] Schmid refers to E2def7 and E1p28 to make his point; see Schmid, *Finalursachen*, p. 246. For a strategy that approaches the matter from the opposite direction by questioning Bennett's premise 5 and arguing that causal history can be sufficiently read off by the thing's intrinsic properties, see Manning, "Spinoza, Thoughtful Teleology, and the Causal Significance of Content", pp. 182–209.

[21] See Garrett, "Teleological Explanation", and Steinberg, "Human Purposiveness".

[22] It is worth noting that Bennett himself points to a dual notion of mental content in Spinoza: "direct representation" meaning a mode of thought that corresponds directly with a mode of extension, and "indirect representation", where this correspondence is not fulfilled. Bennett quickly discards indirect representations as causally impotent and therefore as irrelevant. See Bennett, *Study*, pp. 219–220.

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12.5 Spinoza and Strawson on Human Affectivity

We have seen, in the previous section, that there are ways to reject Bennett's argument. But why, one may wonder, would his interpretation pose a problem for Spinoza? Why, in other words, should we want to save Spinoza from a reading that takes him to deny all causal efficacy to representational content? Apparently, if representational properties are merely causal epiphenomena, then you may also discard teleological explanations altogether, in which case you end up with an eliminativist position. But we have also seen that there is no need to read Spinoza along these lines, as several strategies argue—*pace* Bennett—that on Spinoza's account, representational properties *can* have causal power, and that they can have them without violating parallelism.

However, I am afraid that even the views put forward to criticize Bennett would pose a problem for Spinoza, since they can hardly be reconciled with his ethical–political project. To see why, note that they share a decisive presupposition with Bennett's account, namely, that teleological explanations are legitimate only to the extent that we can make sense of how they are causally efficacious (in terms of efficient causality, of course). At the end of the day, insofar as they try to map teleological explanations onto a certain causal structure, which then can properly be described as a type I law, they can still be considered as reductionist accounts.

More concretely, my reasons for claiming that, in order to really capture Spinoza's concerns, we need an (even) further amended interpretation with respect to this question, are to be found in the Preface to Part Four of the *Ethics*, which, besides the *Appendix* to Part One, marks the second major passage where Spinoza engages directly with final causation. As in the *Appendix*, Spinoza emphasizes that "Nature does nothing on account of an end" (E4pref; C 1:544/G 2:206), but then continues on from considerations about Nature as a whole to a discussion of what it means for finite human agents to act according to ends. In this vein, Spinoza states:

> What is called a final cause is nothing but a human appetite insofar as it is considered as a principle, *or* primary cause, of some thing. For example, when we say that habitation was the final cause of this or that house, surely we understand nothing but that a man, because he imagined the conveniences of domestic life, had an appetite to build a house. So habitation, insofar as it is considered as a final cause, is nothing more than this singular appetite. It is really an efficient cause, which is considered as a first cause, because men are commonly ignorant of the causes of their appetites. (E4pref, C 1:544/G 2:207, emphasis original)

Although Spinoza adopts a rather dismissive attitude towards the idea of final causation, it needs to be underlined that Spinoza does not deny final causes as such, but merely rejects the view that final causes can be used in place of efficient causes.

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Teleology is nothing "above" or "beyond" the realm of efficient causation, whence, if we attempt to understand natural phenomena, any final causes must be accounted for in efficient causes. Otherwise, you open the floodgates to what Spinoza calls the "sanctuary of ignorance [*ignorantiae asylum*]" (E1app, C 1:443/G 2:80), where people seek refuge in arbitrary justifications which are potentially exploited by political powers.

Thus, the passage can be read as an encouragement to look for the efficient causes that determine our appetites. At the same time, however, Spinoza also points to the limits of this quest. By stating that "men are commonly ignorant of the causes of their appetites", he admits that, as finite beings, we do not know all the efficient causes of our appetites. The question is how we should make sense of this ignorance. Given the observation that we cannot know all the causes that determine us, does it even make sense to conceptualize a world where we have actually surpassed our human shortcomings?

For an eliminativist, the answer is a clear "yes". John Carriero, who is very sympathetic to Bennett's approach,[23] reads this passage in the following way: "I take it that Spinoza is implying that if we were not ignorant of the causes of our appetites [. . .] we would drop talk of final causes and stick with appetites or efficient causes."[24] This means that, in a perfect world, where humanity is supposed to have overcome its ignorance, people will be able to rely entirely on mechanist terms and to eliminate final causes (and other connected folk-psychological notions) from their conceptual framework.

To this, I would like to respond with an analogy borrowed from Strawson who, in his seminal "Freedom and Resentment", argued that even within a determinist framework we cannot possibly do away with all voluntarist vocabulary. Consider our everyday experience of resentment. If someone stepped on my hand accidentally, the pain would be no less intense than if they did it on purpose.[25] Nevertheless, I would have a feeling of resentment in the second case, but not, or not necessarily, in the first. What modifies my feelings towards the other person, is the notion that the person's behaviour "wasn't their fault", or that "they didn't know better", etc.

What does this show? Evidently, it may have an impact on our affective life, in particular on our reactive emotions, if we manage to account for actions harming us in terms of efficient causes on which the agent had no influence. This said, we cannot possibly suspend our *principal* reactive attitude towards people with whom we share our lives, however likely it is that our affective reactions change upon consideration of particular actions of others in purely objective, determinist terms.

[23] Bennett himself is not able to provide this passage with any meaning whatsoever, and instead simply states that "Spinoza is saying something he ought not to have said", see Bennett, *Study*, p. 224.
[24] Carriero, "Final Causality", p. 141.
[25] This example is taken from Peter Frederick Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment", p. 6.

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This means, in other words, that we cannot get rid of the ordinary attitude out of which we take others to be responsible for their actions. In Strawson's words:

> The human commitment to participation in ordinary inter-personal relationships is, I think, too thoroughgoing and deeply rooted for us to take seriously the thought that a general theoretical conviction might so change our world that, in it, there were no longer any such things as inter-personal relationships as we normally understand them; and being involved in inter-personal relationships as we normally understand them precisely is being exposed to the range of reactive attitudes and feelings that is in question.[26]

In a nutshell, Strawson suggests on the one hand that we can mitigate or even eliminate our resentment by adopting an objective, third-personal stance. On the other hand, he nevertheless maintains that we cannot possibly abstain from being in a second-personal relationship with others, which means that we make them responsible for their actions that are harmful or beneficial to us, and whenever we do so, this brings it about that we have feelings of resentment or gratitude towards them.

My contention now is that, when it comes to accounting for Spinoza's view of causation and teleology, we find an analogous move. As is clear from his overall approach to the emotions, there is much evidence that he, too, believes that if we manage to account for an emotion in terms of its efficient causes, this may result in a modified emotional state. One key factor, for such change, moreover, is the attribution or withdrawal from attributing moral responsibility for our affects to others. So, in E3p49s Spinoza states:

> *Given an equal cause of Love, Love toward a thing will be greater if we imagine the thing to be free than if we imagine it to be necessary. And similarly for Hate.* (C 1:521/G 2:177, emphasis original)

This shows that Spinoza apparently shares the first part of the Strawsonian proposal on which it makes a difference for our emotions, whether or not we manage to account for some affect in terms of its objective, mechanist, efficient causes. But what about the second part: is there evidence for the view that Spinoza, too, presupposes the existence of an attitude we unavoidably adopt, whenever we participate in ordinary inter-personal relationships? Is there, in other words, such a thing as "the ordinary life" for him, and if so, does he also share Strawson's supposition that living as humans requires, ineliminably, that we think of actions in teleological notions?

[26] Strawson, "Freedom and Resentment", p. 12.

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I do think there is, although, admittedly, large parts of his theory of the affects do aim primarily to show that we can account for all sorts of affects in terms of their efficient causes. However, as the just quoted explanation for the intensity of love and hate exhibits, by the same token, this theory does account for the effect which attribution of will to others has on our affective life. It seems, therefore, legitimate to ask: why does Spinoza feel the need to account for the effects of this practice, were it not because he takes it to shape our lives in many respects?

12.6 Upholding the Practical Irreducibility of Type II Laws

In the previous section, I suggested that Spinoza's theory of the affects has room for the notion of a particular practice, namely, attribution of responsibility, as well as for the assumption that this practice, by way of shaping our ways of looking at others, is an ineliminable factor of our ordinary life. Given the part that teleology plays in any attribution of responsibility, it seems clear that, if my interpretation is right, Spinoza can no longer be regarded as an eliminativist with respect to type II laws. It would be deeply troublesome, if he assumed that type II laws just do not exist, as this would undermine the ordinary notion that inter-personal relationships are different from the kind of relations people have to other things with which we causally interact.

The question, however, is whether the assumption that inter-personal relationships are special in that allowing for the possibility to attribute responsibility to others, also forces us to rethink certain aspects of the *reductionist* interpretation. As we have seen in Section 4, the strategies that countered Bennett's argument took either of the following two forms. *Either* we split between adequate and inadequate ideas and reserve the talk of final causes for the latter (Schmid). This fits nicely with Spinoza's notion of action: on this notion, we only act insofar as we cognize ourselves as the adequate cause of something,[27] which definition leaves all reference to teleological explanations aside. *Or* we assume a dual notion of mental content (Steinberg, Garrett) where only one aspect has to be causally efficacious. This way, the claim that representational properties possess causal efficacy cannot be categorically ruled out and talk of final causes is therefore warranted.

At first glance, it seems as if none of these solutions can be legitimately characterized as "reductionist" (at least not in the sense that the discussions surrounding eliminativism set out), simply because both avoid committing themselves to a full-blown materialist position. As long as we maintain that mental states are expressing something real (namely through, as Spinoza would say, the attribute of

[27] See E3def2: "I say that we act when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause, i.e. (by D1), when something in us or outside us follows from our own nature, of which we are only a partial cause" (C 1:493/G 2:139).

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thought), their description through teleological patterns of explanation has to be—at least to a certain extent—legitimate.

On a closer look, however, things are less clear. Consider, for example, how Steinberg reads the passage in the Preface to Part Four of the *Ethics*:

> Human beings act for ends; but these ends are to be understood as appetites, which are themselves efficient causes. If this is right, Spinoza was not seeking to eliminate teleological explanation *tout court*. Rather, he was seeking to emend our understanding of final cause. [. . .] The legitimacy of teleological explanations requires not just that we act from states with intentional properties, it requires that those states are causally efficacious in virtue of their intentional or representational properties.[28]

Even though this approach is clearly non-eliminativist and allows for human purposiveness, it nevertheless follows Bennett's line of reasoning in one, decisive respect: like Bennett, Steinberg is committed to the view that final causes can only have a place in our conceptual framework if they are causally efficacious. What ultimately matters under such an approach is the concern that all mental properties (whether intrinsic or extrinsic) can be successfully mapped onto a certain physical structure whose causal forces are apprehended purely through mechanical explanations. Due to a dual notion of mental content this does not rule out that humans act according to ends. Does this commit Steinberg to reductionism? I would say that his position is not *explanatorily* reductionist insofar as intentional properties cannot be explained in terms of non-intentional properties. This is because intentional properties are causally efficacious by virtue of being intentional.[29] On the other hand, the position can be described as *functionally* reductionist in the sense that the causal role that intentional properties play within a certain structure boil down to the same kind of role that physiological properties play within the same structure.[30] There is nothing inherently wrong with this position, and, from an overall metaphysical perspective, Spinoza might as well have been a reductionist in this sense. However, we can maintain that Spinoza was indeed a (functional or metaphysical) reductionist and still ask whether, from the limited vantage point of human beings, teleological actions are not something that has to be argued for in the first place (e.g., by justifying their causal efficacy), and that this does not

[28] Steinberg, "Human Purposiveness", pp, 53–54 (emphasis original).

[29] As Steinberg sets out to show, see Steinberg, "Human Purposiveness", p. 54.

[30] Steinberg clearly subscribes to the view that mental properties are functional in nature: "The suggestion, then, is that the best way to think about narrow (*de dicto*) representational content for Spinoza is as that state which orients one's striving in particular ways—that is, as functional, or causal, state. Ideas are best understood functionally, as states that produce such-and-such characteristics outputs when joined with particular affective attitudes" (Steinberg, "Human Purposiveness", p. 66, emphasis original).

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constitute a necessary precondition for any conceiving of human affectivity and interaction in practical contexts.

The necessity of enhancing the reductionist approach by such considerations becomes even more urgent if we review Schmid's account of final causation in Spinoza. Schmid draws a distinction between teleological *descriptions* and teleological *explanations*: where the former are purportedly legitimate according to Spinoza, and the latter not.[31] This has to do with Schmid's claim that final causes only come into the picture if our ideas are inadequate. Therefore, final causes do not suffice for an adequate scientific *explanation* of the world; they merely *describe* the world according to our human limitations and they do so without scientific merit. As I have already hinted at, the shortcomings of this view can be discovered in connection with Spinoza's concept of action, which Schmid closely ties to the requirement that the agent must have an adequate idea.[32] This would mean that whenever we invoke teleological descriptions of our actions, we are in fact dealing with inadequate ideas of these actions. The result would be that the concept of action in Spinoza's sense has a very limited scope: Whenever our actions are reconstructed by teleological explanations (i.e., are formulated as type II laws), this view emphasizes, our actions are not—technically speaking—*actions*, because they stem from inadequate ideas. This might be true; however, it does not release us from the necessity to specify a "looser" concept of action, where teleological explanations must be considered to be an integral part of that concept. As I have tried to show by means of an analogy with Strawson's line of argument, purposiveness is inscribed into Spinoza's idea of human affectivity, and in such a profound manner that it seems impossible to get by without the notion of things or persons behaving "for the sake of" something, or "in order to" do this or that. To summarize, we can say that Schmid's view, while correctly reflecting Spinoza's definitions, does not help us in explaining the type of actions we are confronted with on a daily basis and especially not in political contexts, where, as Spinoza often emphasizes, actions based on adequate ideas are the exception rather than the rule.

[31] See Schmid, *Finalursachen*, p. 240: "Damit zeigt sich das paradox anmutende Ergebnis, dass Spinoza zufolge Zweck*erklärungen* zwar rigoros zurückzuweisen sind, nicht aber Zweck*beschreibungen*." ("The result seems paradoxical, namely that according to Spinoza, teleological *explanations*, unlike teleological *descriptions*, are to be rejected adamantly.") [emphasis original, my translation]

[32] See Schmid, *Finalursachen*, p. 246 (n. 28).

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13

Ingenium and the Argument for Religious Toleration in Spinoza

Daniel Garber

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Human beings differ from one another in numerous ways. Leaving aside the physical differences (some are tall, some short, some light, others dark, etc.), human beings have different likes and dislikes, different beliefs and prejudices, different hopes and fears. These features of one's temperament contribute to making each of us the particular individual that we are.

Spinoza's interest in this conception of individuality comes out particularly clearly in some of his discussions of freedom of worship and religious toleration. Because of their different make-up, some people are attracted to one religion, and some to another.[1] And, Spinoza argues, their individuality is deserving of the toleration of the civil state: within certain limits, at least, the civil state should allow people to practise the religion that best suits their tastes and prejudices, what he calls their "*ingenium*". In the preface to the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (TTP), Spinoza writes:

> Next, because men vary greatly in their *ingenium*, because one is content with these opinions, another with those, and because what moves one person to religion moves another to laughter, from these considerations . . . I conclude that each person must be allowed freedom of judgment and the 'power to interpret the foundations of faith according to his own *ingenium*. We must judge the piety of each person's faith from his works alone. In this way everyone will be able to obey God with an unprejudiced and free spirit, and everyone will prize only justice and loving-kindness. (TTP, pref. 28; C 2:73/G 3:11)

I will begin by discussing the notion of *ingenium* to which Spinoza is appealing here, a notion central in characterizing the moral and political conception of individuality at issue in this context, and the argument for toleration implicit in the

[1] Here I am using 'religion' not in the relatively technical sense that Spinoza uses it in E4p37s1; C 1:565/G 2:236 or E4app XV; C 1:590/G 2:270, but in the more colloquial sense of a historically conditioned bundle of institutions, doctrines, and practices.

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text that I just quoted. But, for Spinoza, *ingenia* pertain not only to individuals but to groups of individuals, not only to people but to peoples. And, one might think, the argument for toleration would transfer more or less directly from individuals to groups of individuals. But, as I will try to show, it is more complex than that.

13.1 *Ingenium* and Individual Nature in Spinoza

Let us begin with individual human beings and the qualities that distinguish them from one another. In the passage just quoted, Spinoza uses the word *ingenium* in this connection. The word is virtually impossible to translate into any modern European language. In his excellent new translation of the TTP, E. M. Curley translates it as 'mentality'.[2] I do not like that very much, and would prefer 'temperament'. In his magisterial *Spinoza: L'expérience et l'éternité*, Pierre-François Moreau translates it as '*complexion*', in English 'constitution', or perhaps, 'disposition'.[3] But none of these really capture the complexity of the notion.[4] So as not to have to make a bad choice, I will leave it in the Latin.

> In their Latin dictionary, Lewis and Short render "*ingenium*" as follows: *Ingenium. . . innate or natural quality, nature.* **II.** In partic., of persons. **A.** *Natural disposition, temper, mode of thinking, character, bent, inclination. . . .* **B.** With respect to intelligence, **1.** *Natural capacity, talents, parts, abilities, genius.*[5]

But as Spinoza uses it, "*ingenium*" seems rather more specific, a cluster of intellectual, cultural, and religious attitudes that we bring to religion, among other domains. One's opinions are obviously an aspect of one's particular *ingenium*, but there are other elements as well. In E3p31c, Spinoza writes that "[. . .] each of us strives, so far as he can, that everyone should love what he loves, and hate what he hates". From this Spinoza concludes that "[. . .] that each of us, by his nature, wants the others to live according to his *ingenium*" (E3p31s; C 1:512/G 2:164), implying that one's loves and hates form a part of one's personal *ingenium*. More generally, the individual *ingenium* seems to constitute the complex of personal beliefs, tastes, prejudices, and the like, whatever it is that makes any individual person the particular individual that he or she is. A person's *ingenium* might also involve religious

[2] See Curley's discussion in his "Glossary", C 2:643–644.
[3] See Moreau, *Spinoza: L'expérience et l'éternité*, p. VII.
[4] On the notion of *ingenium* in the early modern period, see Marr, Garrod, Ramón Marcaída, and Oosterhoof, *Logodaedalus*. On the importance of the notion for Descartes, see Garrod and Marr (eds.), *Descartes and the Ingenium*.
[5] Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, q.v. *ingenium*.

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doctrines, or practices, whether you prefer the Latin Mass or the Lutheran service or the Hebrew Saturday morning prayers.[6]

Where do these individual elements of one's personal *ingenium* come from? Literally, "*ingenium*" means "inborn", the nature that we are endowed with at birth: an "innate or natural quality", as Lewis and Short defined it. No doubt some basic elements of our personalities and temperaments do come to us at birth. But there is nothing to exclude some things coming to us from experience as well. Our experiences can and do give rise to every variety of states, loves and hates, attractions and repulsions, beliefs and prejudices, that shape our intellectual and affective landscape.

Ingenium is thus a way of characterizing what distinguishes one individual from another. But there is another important notion of individuality in Spinoza. The individual is given a rigorous metaphysical definition in the so-called "Short Physical Treatise" (SPT) following E2p13s:

> Definition: When a number of bodies, whether of the same or of different size, are so constrained by other bodies that they lie upon one another, or if they so move, whether with the same degree or different degrees of speed, that they communicate their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner [*certa quadam ratione*], we shall say that those bodies are united with one another and that they all together compose one body or Individual, which is distinguished from the others by this union of bodies. (E2def; C 1:460/G 2:99–100)

One way of forming a complex individual from parts is to constrain them externally, such as putting a bunch of monkeys in a barrel. But more interesting are individuals that are formed from parts that "communicate their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner". One supposes that each individual monkey in the barrel satisfies this definition, as do most other living things. The "certain fixed manner" in question here, what Spinoza calls the "*ratio motus et quietis*" in other passages, emerges as the primary characterization of this technical sense of individuality later in the *Ethics*.[7] In some of his earliest writings, Spinoza talks of a *proportion* (or

[6] The notion of *ingenium* is getting increasing attention in the Spinoza literature. The first recognition of the importance of this notion to Spinoza that I know of is found in Moreau, *Spinoza: l'expérience et l'éternité*, Part 2, Chapter III: "Les champs de l'expérience: Les passions". His account is still fundamental. See also Zourabichvili, "L'identité individuelle chez Spinoza". More recently, the notion of *ingenium* has been featured prominently in Steinberg, *Spinoza's Political Psychology*. His Chapter 1 is focused in ingenium, though considerations related to the notion appear throughout the book. And finally, as this chapter was being completed, Mélanie Zappulla defended a Ph.D. thesis which attempts to give the first full and systematic account of this notion in Spinoza's thought. The dissertation has now been published as Zappulla, *L'Imitation d'autrui et l'Invention de soi: Le concept d'*ingenium *chez Spinoza*.

[7] On this see, especially, the example of the Spanish poet in E4p39s; C 1:569/G 2:240, where Spinoza suggests that a traumatic event, such as a grave illness, can change the *ratio motus et quietis* of a given human body, thus changing its identity from one person to another. But the formula also appears in the SPT, in E2lem5–6; C 1:561/G 2:100–101.

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proportie, in Dutch) of motion and rest, and clearly has a numerical ratio in mind.[8] But in the *Ethics*, it seems something quite different. The *ratio* in question seems to be a kind of definition or principle of organization, broadly conceived, something that is fully consistent with the breadth and imprecision of the Latin "*ratio*". Very roughly, an individual is a collection of smaller parts that are organized in such a way that they maintain a constant relation or structure of motion and rest with respect to one another.[9] This is, admittedly, somewhat vague, but I suspect that Spinoza himself did not know exactly what that structure might be like. I suspect that he thought of it as a kind of placeholder for whatever broadly homeostatic structures future generations might come to identify as the broadly mechanical relations among parts of complex bodies that define their individuality. This is what I shall call the strict metaphysical sense of individuality.[10]

An important feature of the strict metaphysical definition is that the defining characteristic of an individual, even if we knew exactly what is meant by the *ratio motus et quietis* of an individual, is invisible to us. Though I can reidentify the people I regularly deal with, I have no access to their *rationes motus et quietis*. Indeed, I do not even have access to *my own ratio motus et quietis*! But, on the other hand, I do have knowledge of *ingenia*, both my own and that of others. In that way, the notion of *ingenium* gives us a criterion of individuality that can be used in our actual lives.[11]

But more than that, the metaphysical notion of individuality has little in the way of moral or political consequences: it is just a metaphysical fact about some collection of parts that is characterized by a stable *ratio motus et quietis*. But the fact that people are individuals in the sense of having different *ingenia* does have a very important political consequence: the difference in *ingenia* entitles people to follow different religions. This is a moral dimension of individuality, a respect for the characteristics that make individuals the particular individuals they are. In this

[8] See, e.g., KV 2 pref.; C 1:95/G 1:52; KV 2.20; C 1:135 and 137/G 1:95–96 and 99; KV App. II; C 1:155–156/G 1:120–121.

[9] Many commentators read the *ratio motus et quietis* in question as a kind of numerical proportion, following the way Spinoza seems to conceive of it in the KV. See, e.g., Gueroult, *Spinoza II*, pp. 165–168, 171–175, 179–181, 563–569. For alternative views, which read "*ratio motus et quietis*" in the broader way suggested here, see Garber, "Descartes and Spinoza on Persistence and Conatus", pp. 54ff, and Garrett, "Spinoza's Theory of Metaphysical Individuation", pp. 86–87.

[10] I leave aside here the notion of a "*res singularis*", defined in E2def7; C 1:447/G 2:85, which bears an uneasy relationship to the definition of an *individuum*. A *res singularis* is defined as follows: "D7: By singular things I understand things that are finite and have a determinate existence. And if a number of Individuals so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, I consider them all, to that extent, as one singular thing." It is not clear how this relates to the notion of an individual as defined earlier, nor what it is supposed to do for Spinoza that is different from the other notion of an individual.

[11] In this connection, Moreau comments: "Surtout, l'avantage de cette notion tient à ce qu'elle permet de caractériser l'individu a posteriori, sans faire le detour par la deduction géométrique." ["Above all, the advantage of this notion [i.e. *ingenium*] lies in the fact that it allows us to characterise the individual a posteriori, without making the detour through the geometric deduction."] (Moreau, *L'expérience et l'éternité*, p. 398. Cf. pp. 395, 397.)

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way the notion of *ingenium* is not intended to *replace* the metaphysical notion of individuality, but to supplement it.

13.2 Individual *Ingenium* and the Argument for Toleration

So much for *ingenium*. Let's now examine the step from the fact that different people have different *ingenia*, to the conclusion that people should have the ability to practise the religion that best fits their *ingenia.*

The argument for toleration is actually rather complex in Spinoza. Like Hobbes, Spinoza believes that the sovereign has a right to determine religious questions, what the appropriate theology should be, the interpretation of Scripture, the determination of the appropriate rites and ceremonies, etc. He writes:

> I want to show that Religion receives the force of law only from the decree of those who have the right to rule, that God has no special kingdom over men except through those who have sovereignty, that Religious worship and the exercise of piety must be accommodated to the peace and utility of the Republic, and hence, must be determined only by the supreme powers, who must also be its interpreters. (TTP 19.2; C 2:333/G 3:228–229)[12]

But even if the sovereign has the *right* to prohibit religions other than what he/she/they determine to be correct, Spinoza still argues that it would be wise and prudent for the sovereign to allow freedom of expression in general, and in the domain of religion in particular: "[. . .] what we're discussing now is not what their right is [i.e., the right of the sovereign], but what's advantageous" (TTP 20.6; C 2:345/G 3:240). When he takes up the question of toleration in Chapter 20 of the TTP, at the very end of the book, the emphasis is on the individual, and on freedom of speech in the most general sense; religious doctrine and practice seem hardly to be at issue. For example, the first case Spinoza presents in introducing the question is not religion, but politics, the person who thinks "that a law is contrary to sound reason, and therefore thinks it ought to be repealed [. . .]" (TTP 20.15; C 2:347/G 3:241). But here I would like to look more closely at the somewhat different argument suggested in the quotation from the preface that started this chapter: that because people differ in their *ingenia*, and the rites, ceremonies, and theologies

[12] Hobbes holds that the sovereign has the right and duty to judge all opinions, and determine what can be said publicly. See Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 18, in *Leviathan, Volume 2*, p. 272. In particular, the sovereign must be the judge not only of civil law, but the interpreter of divine law [*Leviathan*, Chapter 26, in *Leviathan, Volume 2*, pp. 446–448]. And so the commonwealth should be united by one church, whose doctrines and practices are determined by the sovereign [*Leviathan*, Chapter 31, in *Leviathan, Volume 2*, p. 570]. And so the sovereign should be at the same time the head of the civil government and the established church [*Leviathan*, Chapter 42, p. 864.].

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may differ, people should be allowed to practise religion as they see fit. Here the argument seems more directed at questions of religious freedom, rather than more general issues of freedom of speech.

Spinoza returns to the question of freedom of religion first raised in the preface in Chapter 14 of the TTP, "What is faith, who are the faithful [. . .]". He writes:

> To establish, then, how far each person has the freedom to think what he wishes with respect to faith, and whom we are bound to consider faithful, even though they think differently, we must determine what faith and its fundamentals are. (TTP 14.5; C 2:264/G 3:173–174)

The presumption here is that only those who are "faithful" are allowed the freedom to think and practise their religion. There are standards: not just anything goes in religion, and not just anything that claims to be a religion is worthy of toleration for Spinoza. But what does it mean to be faithful for Spinoza?

To understand what Spinoza means by faith and faithful here, we must turn to his account of Scripture. In a number of chapters that precede the discussion in Chapter 14, Spinoza discusses what the true message of Scripture is. His conclusion is that "the purpose of Scripture is only to teach obedience" (TTP 14.6; C 2:264/G 3:174). In particular, he writes:

> Scripture also teaches, very clearly and in many places, what each person must do to obey God. The whole law consists only in this: loving one's neighbor. So no one can deny that one who, according to God's command, loves his neighbor as himself is really obedient, and according to the law, blessed. (TTP 14.9; C 2:265/G 3:174)

This is the way he often gives the commandment to which we are supposed to be obedient, to love one's neighbour as oneself. But elsewhere, it is a little different: "to love God above all else, and to love your neighbor as yourself" (TTP 12.34; C 2:255/G 3:165). Obedience to these imperatives is, for Spinoza, the core of true religion. Presumably, for Spinoza, freedom of religion is not going to apply to *every* set of practices that may call itself a religion, but only those which promote obedience to these particular imperatives. Spinoza would certainly reject toleration for Satanism, or Narcissism (be suspicious of your neighbours, especially if they do not look like you, and love money and fame above all else). Religions for which Spinoza advocates toleration must satisfy a certain standard: they must be *good* religions in the sense of promoting obedience towards the right imperatives.

It is important to understand what Spinoza means here by obedience. With this term, Spinoza captures in this context the way in which we do something or refrain from doing it because we are commanded by someone who has the appropriate authority over us: "obedience consists in someone's carrying out a command solely

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on the authority of the person who commands it" (TTP 5.25; C 2:144/G 3:74). In this way, Spinoza remarks in a note he later added to the TTP, "Obedience is concerned with the will of the one commanding, not with the necessity and truth of the matter" (TTP 16, ADN XXXIV; C 2:292–293n/G 3:264). Spinoza does, of course, think that there are good reasons for loving your neighbour and loving God. In loving your neighbour, and wanting for him or her what you want for yourself, that is, rationality, you are making them more useful to yourself.[13] And loving God above all is the final conclusion of the *Ethics*, the state to which the seeker after wisdom strives. But this is not obedience:

> [. . .] the divine laws seem to us to be laws, that is, things instituted just as long as we do not know their cause. But when this is known, they thereby cease to be laws, and we embrace them not as laws, but as eternal truths. That is, obedience passes into love, which proceeds from true knowledge as necessarily as light does from the sun. (TTP 16, ADN XXXIV; C 2:293n/G 3:264)

Religion is thus defined not by doctrine, not by reason, but by practice. And, indeed, the only practice that is relevant to the definition of religion and piety is obedience, and obedience to the two moral imperatives: to love your neighbour as yourself, and to love God above all. *Obedience* is what is central, *not belief*. But where does faith come in? And what does Spinoza mean when he talks about the faithful who are entitled to freedom of thought in the passage just quoted?

In Chapter 14 of the TTP, Spinoza argues that if you are going to be obedient, then you must have certain beliefs which promote that obedience: if you have those beliefs, then you will necessarily be obedient. This is what *faith* means for Spinoza: beliefs which support obedience. He states:

> [Faith is] thinking such things about God that if you had no knowledge of them, obedience to God would be destroyed, whereas if you are obedient to God, you necessarily have these thoughts. (TTP 14.13; C 2:266/G 3:175)

In particular, Spinoza argues that there is a certain minimal set of beliefs which supports obedience to the two moral imperatives, what he calls the dogmas or doctrines of universal faith. This will be a minimal set of doctrines that every good religion, every religion that promotes obedience to the moral imperatives will share. These include:

1. God exists.
2. He is unique.

[13] See, e.g., E4p37; C 1:564–565/G 2:235–236.

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3. He is omnipresent.
4, He has the supreme right and domination over all things.
5. The worship of God and obedience to him consist only in Justice and Loving-kindness.
6. Everyone who obeys God by living in this way is saved, and the rest are lost.
7. God pardons the sins of those who repent.[14]

In short, to be obedient to the moral imperatives we are required to believe that there is a God who is a lawgiver, who has given us the law to love our neighbour as ourselves and to love him above all, and that he will reward those who obey and punish those who do not. If we believe these dogmas of universal faith, then we will be motivated to be obedient to the commandments to love our neighbour as ourselves and love God above all, and if we are obedient to these imperatives, then we will believe in the lawgiver who requires us to be obedient. This, it seems, is what Spinoza means by being faithful, and being entitled to freedom of religion. *All* religions that count for Spinoza, *all* that promote the right kind of obedience, will share these doctrines. *And insofar as they promote obedience to the moral imperatives, they are all equally good as religions.*

But though all good religions may share a certain body of doctrines, there may be significant disagreements among them. Spinoza writes:

> [. . .] each person is bound to accommodate these doctrines of faith to his own power of understanding [*ad suum captum*], and to interpret them for himself, as it seems to him easier for him to accept them without any hesitation, with complete agreement of the heart, so that he may obey God wholeheartedly. . . . [E]veryone now is bound to accommodate it to his own opinions, so that he can accept it without any mental conflict and without any hesitation. (TTP 14.32–33; C 2:270/G 3:178–179)[15]

That is to say, the core doctrines may be supplemented by others: the divinity of Christ, the coming of the Messiah, necessity of efficacious grace, the doctrines of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory, etc. Furthermore, even the basic doctrines may admit of different interpretations. As Spinoza points out in this chapter, there are many different conceptions of God, God's nature, the way in which God is a model for life, the way God is omnipresent, etc. Though Spinoza does not discuss the

[14] This is a brief summary of the seven dogmas. For the full details, see TTP 14.25–28; C 2:268–269/G 3:177–178. The dogmas of universal faith and their role in Spinoza's account of religion are treated in greater detail and with more subtlety in Garber, "Philosophy and Theology, Reason and Revelation", esp. §§4–5.

[15] While the phrase "*ad suum captum*" in this quotation is not explicitly included in definitions of *ingenium*, it does echo the idea that people with different *ingenia* have different beliefs and values, as well as different abilities of understanding.

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issue in TTP 14, one might also point to different rites and ceremonies one might add to the basic doctrines: Mass, communion, confession, circumcision, Easter, and Passover, etc.

If all "good" religions share the central dogmas of universal faith, why do they differ in these ways from one another? To answer this, we must return to Spinoza's idea of *ingenium*:

> No one doubts that the common *ingenium* of men is extremely variable, and that not everyone is equally satisfied by all things. Opinions govern men in different ways: those which move one person to devotion, move another to laughter and contempt. (TTP 14.22; C 2:268/G 3:176–177)

What is important, then, is obedience, and any interpretation of the dogmas of universal faith, any supplementary dogmas or practices that get a person or a group of people to obedience are equally good, and worthy of toleration, even if they lead to beliefs and doctrines that are literally in contradiction with one another. When dealing with religious doctrines, truth is not at issue:

> The faith of each person should be considered pious or impious only on account of his obedience or stubbornness, not on account of its truth or falsity. (TTP 14.22; C 2:267–268/G 3:176)

Of course, to be efficacious in inducing people to be obedient, they must actually *accept* the dogmas of universal faith in some way or another.[16] But when judging whether a religion is worthy of toleration or not, the *only* thing at issue is obedience: *truth and falsity are irrelevant*.

This, then, is the rationale for toleration of different religions. Individuals differ in their *ingenia*, in their beliefs, their likes and dislikes, their hopes and their fears. But these differences are unimportant as far as religion goes: as long as they all promote obedience to the moral imperatives, individuals, however different their *ingenia* may be, are all, in a sense, morally equivalent, and equally worthy of toleration in the civil state. Though individuals may differ from one another in their *ingenia*, they should have the equal right to follow the religion of their choice, as long as it is consistent with the moral law.

[16] In Garber, "Philosophy and Theology, Reason and Revelation", I argue that the dogmas of universal faith that Spinoza presents in TTP 14 are to be thought of as ideas of the imagination, but not as beliefs in a full-throated sense.

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13.3 Collective *Ingenium*

It is important to notice here that the argument from *ingenium* for religious toleration is framed in terms of individuals and how they should be treated in a civil state. On the basis of this argument, individuals should be allowed to follow whatever religious beliefs and practices they want, as long as they maintain obedience to the moral law to love their neighbours as themselves and God above all. But the historical sections of the TTP show that Spinoza is perfectly well aware of the social dimensions of religious practice: in general, people with similar beliefs and practices come together to form social units, religious communities. Should these communities be allowed freedom of religious expression, just as the individuals who make them up? Here, it turns out, the situation is somewhat more complicated.

Individual people have *ingenia*, as we have been exploring. But so do at least some groups of people. One example of such a group *ingenium* emerges in Spinoza's discussion of the Hebrews.[17] One of the themes that runs throughout the TTP is the history of the ancient Hebrews, their coming out of Egypt, and their developing religious and political institutions. One of the things that Spinoza notes again and again with respect to the *ingenium* of the Hebrews is their stubbornness, or obstinacy, '*contumacia*' in Latin.[18] At one point, in the course of a discussion of their *ingenium* Spinoza writes:

> Now we must ask why the Hebrews so often failed to obey the law, why they were so often subjugated and why, in the end, their state could be completely destroyed. Perhaps someone will say that this happened because the people were obstinate. But this is childish. Why was this nation more obstinate than others? Was it by nature? Surely nature creates individuals, not nations, individuals who are distinguished into nations only by differences of language, laws and accepted customs. Only the latter two factors, laws and customs, can lead a nation to have its particular *ingenium*, its particular flavour, and its particular prejudices. So if we have to grant that the Hebrews were more obstinate than other mortals, we must ascribe that either to a vice of the laws or to a vice of the accepted customs. (TTP, 17.93–94; C 2:317/G 3:217 [translation modified])

The particular *ingenium* of the Hebrews derives from their laws and customs, Spinoza claims. But where do the laws and customs come from?

[17] Spinoza also notes that the Greeks and Romans can be thought of as having group *ingenia*; see Moreau, *L'expérience et l'éterntité*, pp. 433–436.

[18] In his translation of the TTP, Curley uses "stiff-necked", which I do not like. I substitute "obstinate", "obstinacy", etc., but otherwise follow his translation.

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One important feature of the account of religion in the TTP is that the laws and customs specific to one people or another and to one religion or another do not come from God: "divine law, which renders men truly blessed, and teaches a true life, is universal to all men" (TTP 5.1; C 2:138/G 3:69). Rather, Spinoza argues, laws and customs are the result of the common historical and political experience of a group of people. As Spinoza argues, customs and ceremonies "contribute nothing to blessedness, but only concern the temporal prosperity of the state" (TTP 5.6; C 2:139/G 3:70).

Interesting here is Spinoza's analysis of the early years of the Hebrews when they left Egypt and entered their new home in Israel. This is what Spinoza says about their condition at that moment:

> When they first left Egypt, they were no longer bound by the legislation of any other nation; so they were permitted, as they wished, to enact new laws *or* to establish new legislation, and to have a state wherever they wished, and to occupy what lands they wished. Nevertheless, they were quite incapable of establishing legislation wisely and keeping the sovereignty in their own hands, as a body. Almost all of them were unsophisticated in their *ingenium* and weakened by wretched bondage. Therefore, the sovereignty had to remain in the hands of one person only, who would command the others, compel them by force, and finally, who would prescribe laws and afterwards interpret them. (TTP 5.26–27; C 2:145/G 3:74–75)

This one person, of course, was Moses. Moses was a very clever leader, according to Spinoza. Moses established the laws of a state, but wanted to do it in such a way that "people should do their duty, not so much from fear, as voluntarily" (TTP 5.28; C 2:145/G 3:75). He continues:

> That's why Moses, by divine power and command, introduced religion into the Republic, so that the people would do their duty not so much from fear as from devotion. He also placed them under obligation with benefits, and in the name of God promised them many things in the future. (TTP 5.29; C 2:145–146/G 3:75)

The circumstances in which the Hebrews found themselves, newly freed from slavery, gave rise to certain very specific laws:

> [. . .] in order that the people, who were not capable of being their own masters, should hang on the words of its ruler, he did not permit these men, accustomed as they were to bondage, to act just as they pleased. For the people could do nothing without being bound at the same time to remember the law, and to carry out commands which depended only on the will of the ruler. For it was not at their own pleasure, but according to a certain and determinate command of the law, that

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> they were permitted to plow, to sow, to reap. Likewise, they were not permitted to eat anything, to dress, to shave their head or beard, to rejoice, or to do absolutely anything, except according to the orders and commandments prescribed in the laws. This was not all. They were also bound to have on the doorposts, on their hands, and between their eyes, certain signs, which always reminded them of the need for obedience. (TTP 5.30; C 2:146/G 3:75–76; cf. TTP 17.88; C 2:316/G 3:216)

In this way, Spinoza argues, the Jewish dietary laws, and laws about permissible clothing, hair grooming, the custom of the mezuzah and other such customs are not eternal commands from God, but rather ceremonies and customs specifically relative to the Hebrews, and to their needs as newly freed slaves. Spinoza concludes this discussion as follows:

> This, then, was the object of the ceremonies: that men should do nothing by their own decision, but everything according to the command of someone else, and that they should confess, both by constantly repeated actions and by meditations, that they were not their own master in anything, but were completely subjected to someone else's control. From all this it is established, more clearly than by daylight, that ceremonies contribute nothing to blessedness, and that those of the Old Testament, indeed, the whole law of Moses, was concerned with nothing but the Hebrew state, and consequently, with nothing but corporeal advantages. (TTP 5.31; C 2:146/G 3:76)

More generally, in the TTP, Spinoza goes into some detail about how the institutions of state and the practice of religion grew up together; indeed, were one and the same thing for the ancient Hebrews:

> [. . .] in this state civil law and Religion (which, as we've shown, consists only in obedience to God) were one and the same thing. The doctrines of Religion were not teachings, but laws and commands. Piety was regarded as justice, and impiety a crime and an injustice. Anyone who failed in Religion ceased to be a citizen. For this alone he was considered an enemy. Anyone who died for Religion was thought to have died for his Country. Absolutely no distinction was made between civil law and Religion. (TTP 17.31; C 2:302/G 3:206)

These civil/religious laws were instituted not out of obedience to divine law, but as a response to the needs of the Hebrews at that moment in their historical development. As such, they were not meant as models that everyone should follow, but were only meant for a particular people in a particular historical circumstance.

The *ingenium* of a people is a consequence of laws, customs, and ceremonies, not part of an inherent nature. But, as we have seen, laws, customs, and ceremonies

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themselves result from the particular needs of a people in particular historical circumstances, such as the Hebrews experienced when they left Egypt and were off on their own for the first time. From this it follows that the *ingenium* of a people is a consequence of historical circumstances as well. But once a particular *ingenium* is acquired by a group, it can, in good part, determine important features of the culture of a people. Writing again about the Hebrews, Spinoza claims:

> Reason teaches as clearly as possible how much all these things—freedom from human dominion, devotion to their country, an absolute right in relation to all others, a hatred not only permitted, but even pious, regarding everyone as hostile, the particularity of customs and rites—reason, I say, teaches, and experience itself has been a witness, how much all these things would strengthen the hearts of the Hebrews to bear everything with special constancy and virtue, for the sake of their Country. While the city was standing, they could never endure being under the rule of a foreign power. That's why they frequently called Jerusalem the rebellious city. (TTP 17.82; C 2:314/G 3:215)

In this way, common historical experience determines *ingenium*, and *ingenium* in turn shapes what we might call in a very broad sense the form of life of a people.

13.4 Collective Individuals: A Digression

Eventually, I want to look at the extent to which the argument for toleration that Spinoza proposes for individual people also holds for groups of people, peoples in the plural, such as the Hebrews. But before turning to that question, I want to pause over a subsidiary issue, the question as to whether or not civil societies constitute genuine individuals.

Above I discussed the strict metaphysical sense of individuality that Spinoza advances in the Short Physical Treatise (SPT) following E2p13s. There, as I noted earlier, a central notion is the *ratio motus et quietis*. This is the configuration of bodies in motion and rest that defines an individual as the individual that it is. So defined, the metaphysical definition of individuality is applicable primarily to bodies: only bodies have smaller parts that bear relations of motion and rest with respect to one another. Presumably, all sorts of bodies might be said to be individuals: planets, stones, buildings, as well as living things like trees, oysters, cats, and human bodies. These seem like clear cases. But less clear is whether complex aggregates of these complex individuals count as genuine individuals as well. At the end of the SPT Spinoza does talk about higher-order individuals in this technical sense, up to the universe as a whole: "[. . .] the whole of nature is one individual [*totam naturam unum esse Individuum*][. . .]" (E2lem7s; C 1:462/G 2:102). This is what he calls the "the face of the whole universe [*facies totius universi*]" in

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a celebrated letter.[19] But in between the obvious cases of individuals, and the totality of the universe, it is not at all clear what individuals there might be. Single trees would seem to be individuals, but what about forests? Buildings might be individuals, but what about cities? You and I are individuals, but what about civil societies? This last case has got considerable discussion in the literature. Are civil societies, such as the Hebrews, genuine individuals in the sense of Spinoza's strict definition? Or are they just what has been called "quasi-individuals", collectives whose unity falls short of genuine metaphysical individuality in the strict sense of the definition from the SPT discussed earlier?[20]

Now, it has seemed to some commentators that it is at least a necessary condition for a complex individual to have a mind that it be an individual in the strict metaphysical sense.[21] Since people, individuals with minds, are the kinds of things to which individual *ingenia* are usually attributed, there is a great temptation to see the attribution of *ingenia* to collectives, as Spinoza clearly does in the case of the Hebrews, as requiring that they be treated as having minds and being individuals in this strict metaphysical sense.[22]

But even though the temptation is strong, I am not sure the argument is decisive. While having a mind (and being a genuine individual) does, indeed, provide a natural foundation for attributing an *ingenium* to a group, it is not altogether necessary. To understand why, let me turn, briefly, to another figure important for the history of the notion of an *ingenium*, Huarte de San Juan, a very widely read sixteenth-century Spanish medical writer who may well have been known to Spinoza.[23] In his influential *Examen de los ingenios* (1575), he, too, attributes *ingenia* to groups of people.[24] Huarte's conception of *ingenium* is based on a Galenic theory of the humours: he holds that the balance of the humours determines the *ingenium* of an individual. In that way the *ingenium* is a matter of the physical make-up of an individual.[25] Because, on Huarte's medical theories, the humours are changed by things such as diet and climate, a group of people who eat a similar diet and live in a particular climate can together change their common *ingenia* by changing their diet or climate. In this way, a group of people all come to share an *ingenium* by virtue of their common experience, which leads each individual in the group to have in their *ingenia* certain features in common.[26] Now, Spinoza certainly did not

[19] Spinoza to G. H. Schuller, 29 July 1675, Ep. 64; C 2:439/G 4:278.

[20] For a good summary of the state of the debate over whether the civil state constitutes a genuine individual in the metaphysical sense, with copious references to the main literature on the question, see Santos Campos, "The Individuality of the State".

[21] Cf. Renz, *The Explainability of Experience*, pp. 60–61.

[22] See Moreau, *L'expérience et l'éterntité*, pp. 427–465.

[23] On Huarte de San Juan in relation to Spinoza, see Moreau, "Spinoza y Huarte de San Juan".

[24] Juan Huarte de San Juan, *Examen de ingenios, para las sciencias*. There are many roughly contemporary English translations. I consulted Huarte, R. C. Esquire, trans., *The Examination of Men's Wits* (London: Adam Islip for Thomas Adams,1616).

[25] For the details of the account, see Huarte, *Examination*, Chapters 5 and 6.

[26] See here Huarte's treatment of the Hebrews, in *Examination*, pp. 186ff.

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have a Galenic theory of *ingenium*. But suitably adapted, Huarte's conception can be translated into Spinoza's terms. Understood in that way, a group can be said to have an *ingenium* by virtue of the fact that each of its members shares a common property. In this way one can conceive of a common *ingenium* of sorts as the common properties of the *ingenia* of the members of a group, without any more metaphysical baggage than goes into conceiving aggregates.

13.5 Collective *Ingenium* and the Argument for Toleration

Now, whatever the metaphysical status of social groups, it would seem that the argument for toleration of religion and religious practice that holds for individuals should hold for groups of individuals as well. Consider the minority religious groups in Spinoza's Amsterdam, the Jews, or the Lutherans, or the Catholics. Certainly, the conclusion of his argument for toleration should be that each member of these communities should have the right to practise his or her religion individually, without the interference of the state. But if each individual Jew, Lutheran, or Catholic can practise his or her religion freely, should the Jewish, Lutheran, or Catholic community not have such a right as well?

The answer to this question turns out to be less straightforward. Let me call attention to a curious feature of the political theory of the *Tractatus Politicus* (TP), an incomplete work on politics in progress at the time of Spinoza's death. After some introductory chapters on general considerations about political philosophy, Spinoza turns to an examination of the three principal forms of government, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. (The chapters on monarchy and aristocracy are complete; the section on democracy was just started at the time of Spinoza's death.)

As part of these discussions, Spinoza treats the place of religion and religions in society. In treating the aristocracy, he recommends that there should be an established religion of the state. In principle, one could imagine that any religion that recognized the two central imperatives, to love your neighbour and to love God, should be acceptable. But in the TP, Spinoza makes a specific recommendation for aristocracies: he recommends that the aristocrats adopt as a civil religion "the very simple and most Universal Religion". As I read him here, that suggests an instantiation of that religion which involves the least addition to the absolute core of religion as such, the two imperatives. That is, the recommendation seems to be for a religion that involves minimal additional doctrines, and minimal additional practices, ceremonies, rules, etc. What is being institutionalized is not just *any* religion that satisfies Spinoza's constraints, but the *simplest* and *most universal* such religion, the religion that has most in common with other religions.[27] Why that?

[27] For further details, see Daniel Garber, "Religion and the Civil State".

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This is Spinoza's reasoning:

> For it's very necessary to make sure that the Patricians aren't divided into sects, some favoring one group, others favoring others, and that they don't, in the grip of superstition, try to take away from their subjects the freedom to say what they think. (TP 8.46; C 2:587/G 3:345)[28]

Spinoza goes on to argue that while religious freedom is certainly important, religions in the state that citizens choose to follow outside of the one chosen for the state should clearly have a status inferior to that of the established state religion. And so, for example, he recommends that for these non-established religions, "large assemblies ought to be prohibited", that houses of worship belonging to religions other than the established one "should be small, of some definite size, and at some distance from one another", as opposed to those dedicated to the national religion, which should be "large and magnificent", and run entirely by the patricians.[29]

Spinoza's motivations for some of the details here are a bit obscure. But the general point is clear: Spinoza is making his recommendation to establish a single, simple national church not to suppress religious freedom, but to guarantee it. Now, an aristocracy is a government run by a special class of people, the patricians or aristocrats, a group that holds the sovereignty collectively. What seems to worry Spinoza is the possibility that struggles among the aristocratic class will have an effect on the freedom of non-aristocrats to follow whatever religions they would like. I suspect that what worries Spinoza is the possibility that if aristocrats are divided into different religious sects, they will attempt to advance their own religious agendas by recruiting members from the citizenry at large, and suppressing in society opposing religious views. Better to have them all together in a single sect, one quite minimal, which has much in common with the other sects in society as a whole.[30]

But why are other religious groups obligated to be less visible than the established church? Spinoza offers no explanation, but perhaps, he may have thought, if this minimal established church (as it were, the common denominator of all the other religions) dominates, then none of the other sects will, and the civil society will be safe from the domination of one particular religion over the others. Spinoza is committed to the position that each individual citizen is free to practise his or her own religion (within the bounds of the imperatives that constitute divine law

[28] Oliver Toth has questioned Spinoza's logic here: "One might think that the less determinate the content of the religion, i.e. less dogmas are fixed, the more room there is for individual interpretation and factionalism." I think he is probably right.

[29] TP 8.46; C 2:587/G 3:345.

[30] One might worry, though, as Spinoza does not, that forcing this uniformity and minimalism on the aristocracy impinges on their own freedom of religion.

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for him), but civil society has to have an organizational structure that will ensure and sustain true freedom of religious practice. What this requires is certain restrictions on organized groups of co-religionists. In order to maintain the freedom of individual people to practise the religion of their choice, Spinoza seems to think that there needs to be restrictions on the freedom of organized religious communities: the religious freedom of individual people seems to require constraints on the religious freedom of groups of people.

Here it is interesting to note that Spinoza's position is a reflection of the situation in the Dutch Republic of his day. There was an established religion, the Reformed Church. Others were allowed to practise, but with restraints. The strictest constraints were on the Catholic community. They were allowed to worship, but behind closed doors, in private locations, and they were not allowed to build churches.[31] While Jews could build synagogues, they were very cautious about being too public about their community activities. Furthermore, political theorists like Hugo Grotius proposed rather strict constraints on the organization of Jewish communities. While not officially adopted, they did have an influence on the laws that were adopted in various places in the Dutch Republic.[32]

Though individuals may have rights and privileges, they do not necessarily pass onto groups of those individuals: individual Jews may have been granted the right to practise their religion freely and in public, but it does not follow from that that the Jewish Community, that is, the community composed of individual Jews, possesses the same rights and privileges. Individual people and the religion that they practise are not a threat to the religious freedom of others who practise different religions. But when individuals with the same religious commitments come together and form groups and sects, things get more complicated: the wealth, visibility, and political power of one religious group over another can potentially threaten the freedom that individuals have to put into practice the conception of religious doctrine and practice that agrees best with their own *ingenium*.[33]

[31] Kaplan, "'Dutch' Religious Tolerance", p. 8; Kooi, "Paying Off the Sheriff", p. 96; Van Nierop, "Sewing the Bailiff in a Blanket", pp. 110–111.

[32] Spaans, "Religious Policies", pp. 79, 81; van Rooden, "Jews and Religious Toleration", p. 143.

[33] I would like to thank the many audiences to which I have presented this argument for numerous helpful suggestions. But I would like especially to thank Oliver Toth and Sarah Tropper for their careful reading of the final text, and their very penetrating comments.

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PART VI

HUMAN LIFE FROM AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

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14

Becoming One: Theology and Philosophy, Will and Intellect, Mode and Substance in Spinoza

Michael Della Rocca

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This chapter aims to shed light on Spinoza's metaphysics and philosophy of mind by closely examining Spinoza's argument in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* that theology and philosophy are independent and that neither one is a "handmaid" of the other. In the *Ethics*, however, the relation between theology and philosophy seems to undergo a transformation because, in that work, theology and philosophy are in some sense united or even the same. I will argue that this union between theology and philosophy rests on the more fundamental union between will and intellect in Spinoza. I will also argue, in the last half of this chapter, that the relation between theology and philosophy, as illuminated by the identity of will and intellect, sheds surprising light on the relation between substance and mode in Spinoza. One upshot of this entire inquiry is a stunning hermeneutical lesson: Spinoza—quite rightly—treats his own words and even his own definitions with less reverence and respect than his often overly pious readers treat them.

14.1 Theology and Philosophy

The distinction between—and the independence of—theology and philosophy is inscribed into the very structure of Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise* (hereafter: TTP). He states unequivocally that his resolution to separate faith from philosophy is "the main purpose of this work [*totius operis praecipuum intentum*]" (TTP 14.5, G 3:174). Spinoza elaborates on this separateness in Chapter 15 when he says, "theology is not bound to be the handmaid [*ancillari*] of reason, nor reason the handmaid of theology, but . . . each rules its own domain" (TTP 15.21, G 3:184). He even goes so far as to say that "there are no dealings [*commercium*], or no relationship [*affinitatem*], between faith or [*sive*] theology, and philosophy" (TTP 14.37, G 3:179; see also TTP 15.25, G 3:185, and TTP 15.43, G 3:188). In a similar vein, Spinoza says in *Cogitata Metaphysica* (Part 2, Chapter 12): "theological

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knowledge is altogether other than, or completely different in kind from, natural knowledge [*prorsus alia, sive tota genere diversa à cognitione naturali*]" (C 1:341/ G 1:275).

With his denial of the dependence of philosophy on theology, Spinoza is taking a hard line against those who think that theologians and clerics in general should have primacy over reason. With his rejection of the dependence of theology on philosophy, Spinoza equally stands against those who would allow rational inquiry to dictate what religious beliefs citizens are permitted to hold. By the former stance—rejecting the dependence of philosophy on theology—Spinoza means to secure freedom of philosophical thought. By the latter stance—rejecting the dependence of theology on philosophy—Spinoza means to secure the freedom of religious practice.[1] Of course, it is an interesting question whether Spinoza succeeds in the TTP in establishing the mutual independence of theology and philosophy. The main point I want to stress at this stage is that Spinoza affirms this independence in the TTP.

In so doing, Spinoza agrees with his opponents on a key matter, namely, the claim that philosophy is distinct from theology. He disagrees with them only on the further claim of independence. Those who see philosophy as subservient to theology or theology as subservient to philosophy presuppose that philosophy and theology are not identical or the same. But, it is the further claim of dependence—in one direction or the other—that is Spinoza's main target here.

To support the view that theology and philosophy are mutually independent, Spinoza offers a helpful characterization of their goals and methods. For Spinoza, the goal of theology is to inculcate or even "command [*imperat*]" (TTP 15.22, G 3:184) obedience to God. As Spinoza says in TTP 15.21, the domain of theology "is piety and obedience [*pietatis & obedientiae*]" (TTP 15.21, G 3:184). Since, for Spinoza, religion "consists in obedience to God [*in sola obedientia erga Deum consistit*]" (17.31, G 3:206; see also TTP 16.53-44, G 3:198),[2] the goal of theology is to promote religion. Similarly, Spinoza sees faith—which he regards as equivalent to theology[3]—as directed at "nothing but obedience and piety" (TTP 14.38, G 3:179; see also TTP 14.13 and 14.16, G 3:175).

Theology's method of achieving this goal of obedience is, as far as the TTP is concerned, heavily reliant on imagination and the senses.[4] Thus, Spinoza emphasizes that theological and scriptural teaching proceeds by "historical narratives

[1] On this independence, see Fraenkel, "Spinoza's Philosophy of Religion", especially p. 378, and Steinberg, "Spinoza's Political Philosophy", especially Section 3.2.

[2] See also TTP 16.53-44, G 3:198, and KV 2.18: "[we] offer ourselves entirely to him. For that is what true religion and our eternal salvation and happiness really consist in" (G 1:88).

[3] See TTP 14.37, G 3:178, quoted earlier, where Spinoza links "faith" and "theology" with "*sive*", the "or" of equivalence.

[4] Here and throughout this section, I am indebted to Susan James' great paper, "When Does Truth Matter: The Relation between Theology and Philosophy", in James, *Learning to Live Together*, pp. 25–41.

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[*historiarum*]" (15.36, G 3:187), in contrast to "mathematical demonstration" that philosophy may employ. Spinoza also states that "the foundations of faith are histories and language, and [those foundations] must be sought only from scripture and revelation" (14.38, G 3:179). For Spinoza, such words and images are, of course, a source of error (TIE §§88–89), and, for this reason, theology is not a means of reaching the truth.

This disconnection from the truth is the basis of Spinoza's separation of theology and philosophy in the TTP, for, as he stresses, "the goal of philosophy is nothing but truth [*Philosophiae . . . scopus nihil est, praeter veritatem*]" (14.38, G 3:179). And whereas the method of theology is imaginative thought, the method of philosophy is demonstrative reasoning. In Chapter 14, he emphasizes that "the foundations of philosophy are common notions, and [its truth] must be sought only from nature" (TTP 14.38, C 2:271/G 3:179).[5] Such common notions are of universal, pervasive features of the world, and these notions are central to what Spinoza calls *ratio* or reason. And he goes on to contrast philosophy with theology in Chapter 15 by pointing out that theology does not aspire to "mathematical demonstration", whereas philosophy does (TTP 15.36–38, G 3:187–188). Further, in an important annotation to the TTP (which we shall return to shortly), Spinoza explicitly separates the obedience that theology promotes from a concern with truth: "Obedience is concerned with the will of the one commanding, not with the necessity and truth of the matter [*rei necessitatem et veritatem*]" (C 2:292–293/G 3: 264).

This is how the contrast is drawn in the TTP. In the *Ethics*, however, the relation between theology and philosophy is quite different. This is initially difficult to see because Spinoza does not frequently use the terms "theology" and "philosophy" in the *Ethics*.[6] But he does in the *Ethics* often speak of reason—which is obviously connected to philosophy's goal of truth in the TTP—and of religion and piety—which in the TTP is central to theology's goal of obedience. By seeing how reason, on the one hand, and religion and piety, on the other, are joined in the *Ethics*, we will gain insight into how the relation between theology and philosophy is transformed across the two works.

Quite simply, religion and piety converge with reason in the *Ethics*. Thus, consider E4p37s1 and E4p73s (which invokes E4p37). In E4p37s1, Spinoza indicates that desires to do good that are guided by reason and the knowledge of God are in keeping with religion and piety.

> [W]hatever we desire and do of which we are the cause insofar as we have the idea of God, or insofar as we know God, I relate to religion [*refero Religionem*].

[5] Spinoza, thus, it seems, includes natural philosophy within the scope of philosophy.

[6] For some uses of "theology" in the *Ethics*, see 1app (G 2:80), 4p35s (G 2:234); for "philosophy", see 1p33s2, 1app (G 2:82), 2p10cs, 2p40s, 3p57s, 5pref (G 2:279).

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> The desire to do good generated in us by our living according to the guidance of reason, I call piety [*pietatem*].[7]

Similarly, in E4p73s, Spinoza says that the actions of someone guided by reason (and, hence, presumably in keeping with philosophy) lead to things "which concern true life and religion [*quae ad veram vitam, & Religionem spectant*]". Here, again, reason leads to religion.

Also suggestive here is E5p41, the penultimate proposition in the *Ethics*: "Even if we did not know that our mind is eternal, we would still regard as of the first importance piety, religion, and absolutely all the things we have shown (in Part IV) to be related to tenacity and nobility". Here religion and piety are connected to tenacity and nobility, two desires that Spinoza defines in terms of reason in E3p59s.

Thus, in the *Ethics*, religion is transformed, from a non-rational affair focused on obedience and not on the truth, into a rational, truth-oriented endeavour. Religion, thus, becomes much like philosophy, as philosophy was conceived to be in the TTP.

In this light, we can see that religion and piety conceived as rational in the *Ethics* do not achieve the kind of non-rational obedience described in the TTP, but instead embody a rational pursuit of the truth. This is the transformation of religion and piety, and there is a suggestion too of a similar rational transformation even of obedience. This suggestion appears not in the *Ethics* where Spinoza uses the term "obedience" in only one passage (E4p37s2), which concerns compliance with civil laws, but in the TTP itself. In the annotation alluded to earlier in which Spinoza specifies that obedience is not concerned with "the necessity and truth of the matter", he goes on to say that, when we understand the cause of divine laws "we embrace them not as laws, but as eternal truths". At this point when we have a rational appreciation of the divine nature, Spinoza says strikingly, "obedience passes into love [*in amorem transit*], which proceeds from true knowledge as necessarily as light does from the sun" (C 2:293/G 3:264). Here, Spinoza speaks in the TTP of a transformation of obedience analogous to the kind of transformation of religion that he endorses in the *Ethics*: just as (between the TTP and the *Ethics*) religion is transformed into a rational desire to do good, so too in this annotation to the TTP, obedience is transformed into rational love of God.

It is telling that this annotation (as all of Spinoza's annotations to the TTP) was added around 1676, more than six years after he finished the TTP and after he had subsequently completed the *Ethics* (C 2:60). It is as if Spinoza in this annotation

[7] Curley translates "*Pietatem*" here as morality, and that is legitimate, but the fact that Curley does not use the translation "piety" obscures the connection with Spinoza's uses of the term "*pietas*" in key places in the TTP. For example, in the subtitle of the TTP, the term "*Pietate*" probably should not be translated as "morality", and Curley correctly translates it as "piety" here. For some discussion of these issues, see Curley 2:648.

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is expressing his understanding of obedience from the vantage point of the new understanding of religion and piety that he embraces in the *Ethics*.

The main point for our purposes here is that, given the connection in the TTP among theology, religion, piety, and obedience, the transformation that religion, piety, and obedience undergo points to a transformation in theology itself, a transformation which sees theology and philosophy as converging, and sees theology as newly rational.

Notice, however, that the kind of reason that now animates religion and theology is not the kind of reason focused simply on demonstrative reasoning or the common notions that Spinoza associates with philosophy in the TTP. Rather, reason here aligns with intuition. Spinoza specifically connects the reason at work in E4p37s1 with the knowledge of God. This knowledge, in turn, as Spinoza indicates in E4p28 and E5p27d, is associated with the third kind of knowledge or intuitive knowledge (*scientia intuitiva*): "the greatest virtue of the mind is to know God [. . .] or [*sive*] to understand things by the third kind of knowledge" (C 1:609/G 2:297). The use of "*sive*" here indicates that the knowledge of God is equivalent to the third kind of knowledge. As Spinoza articulates the concept of the third kind of knowledge in E2p40s2, such knowledge "proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things" (C 1:478/G 2:122). This kind of knowledge focuses not just on universal features of individual things, but on the essences of those things, as those essences follow from the essence of God. Because this rational knowledge that the person guided by reason has is not general, it is more powerful, more affective, more active than reason, which is more narrowly conceived in the TTP. Spinoza discusses this greater power of the third kind of knowledge in E5p36s where he speaks of:

> how much the knowledge of singular things I have called intuitive or knowledge of the third kind [. . .] can accomplish, and how much more powerful it is than the universal knowledge I have called knowledge of the second kind.

Spinoza goes on to say that this universal knowledge:

> does not affect our mind as much as when [a certain conclusion] is inferred from the very essence of any singular thing which we say depends on God. (E5p36s; C 1:613/G 2:303)

Thus, the person following reason is guided by a philosophy which is oriented towards action (as theology is in the TTP), but not on imaginative or passive or error-prone grounds. Such imaginative cognition would be knowledge of the first kind. Instead, the knowledge of the person following reason is oriented toward action on truth-conducive grounds. The kind of reason at work in the *Ethics* is thus

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more robust, more powerful, more active, than the kind of reason (and the concomitant kind of philosophy) described in the TTP.

With reason thus enriched, philosophy—while retaining the goal of truth—becomes directed towards action, just as theology is in the TTP. Once again, in the *Ethics*, philosophy and theology converge: philosophy enriched by intuitive knowledge and by the activity at the heart of intuitive knowledge comes to achieve the goal of theology, but comes to do so in a rational manner that is not based on imagination and passivity. Philosophy thus takes on, as James says, "an almost religious aura",[8] though I might go so far as to omit the "almost" here.

A number of passages in the *Ethics* confirm that Spinoza endorses a dynamic, active conception of reason. Thus, Spinoza is willing to regard both the second and third kinds of knowledge as a matter of reason. To see this, note that Spinoza defines the second kind of knowledge as "ratio" in E2p40s2 and as concerned with common properties of things that do not capture the essence of any particular thing. Intuition or the third kind of knowledge, as we have seen, "proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the [NS: formal] essence of things" (C 1:478/G 2:122). The third kind of knowledge, which—unlike the second—captures the essences of particular things, is still, however, rational because it is based on a rational grasp of the common properties. This grasp, Spinoza says, involves the (or an) essence of God (see E2p47 and its reliance, through E2p46 and E2p45, on E2p38, which speaks of our adequate grasp of things which are common to all).

To see this shared rational nature of the second and third kinds of knowledge, note first that, for Spinoza, both the second and third kinds of knowledge are what he calls adequate cognition. The first kind of knowledge consists of inadequate ideas. This demarcation of the domain of adequate ideas is explicit in E2p42dem where Spinoza equates (by means of a "*hoc est*") an adequate idea of the true and of the false with knowing the true and the false by the second or third kind of knowledge.

Note also that Spinoza equates adequate ideas and clear and distinct ideas. This equivalence is explicit in E2p36 where the marker of the equivalence is, again, a "*sive*". Now consider what Spinoza says in E4p26d: "the essence of reason is nothing but our mind, insofar as it understands clearly and distinctly (see the definition of this in E2p40s2)" (C 1:559/G 2:227). Here reason is equated with clear and distinct understanding. But, as we just saw clear and distinct understanding is equated with adequate understanding, which encompasses the second and third kind of knowledge. Thus, here the scope of reason includes the third kind of knowledge as well as the second. A similar linkage of clarity and distinctness, adequacy, reason, and the second and third kinds of knowledge takes place in E4p52dem.

[8] James, *Learning to Live Together*, p. 49.

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Spinoza also, in a number of passages, links reason and activity. Thus, he says in E4p51dem:

> favor is a love toward him who has also benefited another (E3da19), and so can be related to the mind insofar as it is said to act (E3p59), that is [*hoc est*] (by E3p3) insofar as it understands. Therefore, it agrees with reason. (C 1:574–575/G 2:248)

For Spinoza, we act only insofar as we have adequate ideas. This is the import of E3p3 which Spinoza cites in E4p51dem. See also E3p1 and E3p1c. Thus, for Spinoza, the connection between reason and activity is equally a connection between reason and adequate ideas: to reason is to have and use adequate ideas. And since, as we have just seen, adequate ideas consist of either the second or the third kind of knowledge, Spinoza is equating reason here with the having of either the second or third kind of knowledge. Here again the scope of the term "*ratio*" includes the third kind of knowledge. (See also E4p61dem.)

Similarly, Spinoza says in 4app3:

> Our actions—that is, those desires which are defined by man's power or reason [*potentiâ seu ratione*]—are always good. (C 1:588/G 2:266)

Here Spinoza equates reason and power, and, of course, the ideas that are powerful include both ideas that embody the second and ideas that embody the third kinds of knowledge. Here again the scope of *ratio* includes the second and third kinds of knowledge.

In so moving in the *Ethics* to a richer, more active conception of reason and philosophy, Spinoza is *not* giving us a philosophy that transcends theology and leaves it behind. Rather, in giving us a philosophy and a reason enriched, he is giving us as well a religion and a theology that are purged of their passive or imaginative elements. At the same time, philosophy and reason have become more robust—purged of the focus on the general or universal as opposed to the particular—and have become action-oriented, all while preserving the focus on truth. With theology thus purified and philosophy thus purified, we can see how theology and philosophy are united; they are really in the end one and the same. Each of theology and philosophy comes into its own, as it were, and, in so doing, converges—and perhaps unites—with the "other" which is no longer really other.

14.2 Will and Intellect

Behind this move in the *Ethics* to a broader conception of reason and to a more rational form of religion and of theology, and behind the resulting convergence of theology and philosophy, is another crucial unification in Spinoza, namely,

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the unification of intellect and will. Recall that in the TTP, Spinoza portrays philosophy and reason as relatively inactive, focused on knowledge of general and universal matters and without the practical import of a theology geared simply to obedience and not focused on knowledge. But, in the *Ethics*, theology and philosophy come together in purified forms because activity and knowledge come together, and because Spinoza emphasizes the inherent power of ideas.

This convergence of knowledge and action or power in the mind is embodied in Spinoza's pronouncement in E2p49c: "The will and the intellect are one and the same [*Voluntas & intellectus unum, & idem sunt*]". It is because of this identity that, for Spinoza, in understanding things the mind is active. Ultimately, this identity of will and intellect is grounded, as I have argued in "The Power of an Idea" and elsewhere, in Spinoza's commitment to the principle of sufficient reason (the PSR), the principle that each thing that exists or each fact that obtains has an explanation.[9] The key point here is that there would be nothing in virtue of which—nothing that could explain why—the will and the intellect are distinct, and so, given the PSR, the will and the intellect are not distinct. The rationalist thought here is that if there were a sharp distinction between will and intellect, there would be nothing in virtue of which they would be distinct. Further, if they were distinct, there would be nothing available to explain how will and intellect could engage or interact. In this respect, the alleged interaction between will and intellect would be every bit as unintelligible as the alleged interaction between a Cartesian mind and a disparate Cartesian body. I will not explore further here these rationalist underpinnings of the identity of will and intellect, but I will have occasion to note the similarly rationalist underpinnings of the principle that generates the union of substance and modes.

Because of the role of the identity of will and intellect in understanding the convergence of theology and philosophy, we can see that it is only by failing to fully appreciate the identity of will and intellect that one can regard theology and philosophy as distinct. The significance of the failure to appreciate the identity of will and intellect is apparent in the TTP itself where Spinoza criticizes those who want to make philosophy ancillary to theology.

> I can find no words to express my amazement that people should want to make reason, [God's] greatest gift, a divine light, subordinate to dead letters [*mortuis litteris*]—which men's wicked conduct could have corrupted—that it should be thought no crime to speak unworthily against the mind, the true original text of God's word, and to maintain that it is corrupt, blind, and lost, but that it should be considered the greatest crime to think such things about the letter, the image of God's word. (TTP 15.10, C 2:275/G 3:182)

[9] See, e.g., E1ax2 and E1p11de m2, and Della Rocca, "Interpreting Spinoza: The Real is the Rational".

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Spinoza's disdain for those who revere the "dead letters" of the text is, as Curley rightly notes in his footnote to this passage (at C 2:275n10), an illustration of the view stated in E2p49 and developed in E2p49s that the will and intellect are one and the same. At an important point in that scholium, Spinoza inveighs against those who:

> look on ideas . . . as mute pictures on a tablet [*picturas in tabulâ mutas*], and preoccupied with this prejudice, do not see that an idea, insofar as it is an idea, involves an affirmation or negation. (C 1:486/G 2:132)

Spinoza also uses the mute picture analogy in E2p43s. In the TTP, Spinoza criticizes those who see theology as separate from and dominating philosophy by accusing them of an obsession with dead letters. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza uses the motif of mute pictures to criticize those who see the intellect and will as separate and, in effect, to challenge any separation of theology and philosophy properly understood.

In this light, we can characterize the assimilation of theology and philosophy that Spinoza effects in the *Ethics* as turning on the rejection of a *distinction* between the will and the intellect. Further, we can see that, in other respects that I turn to now, this assimilation also turns on the rejection of certain distinctions.

First, as we saw, theology when purified gives up its imaginative methodology that is based on the passivity of sensible experience. In thus becoming purified, theology sheds the *distinction* between a perceiver and the object of perception: cognition becomes more rational in the robust sense of *ratio* and hence more self-determining and more active, rather than determined by some other, *distinct* object. Here the identification of will and intellect, action and thought, goes along with the assimilation of perceiver and thing perceived. Similarly, in its purified state, philosophy no longer relies on a methodology focused on the general as opposed to the particular. Again, in adopting the enriched kind of *ratio* in the form of the third kind of knowledge, philosophy no longer relies upon a *distinction* between general and particular. This characterization of the transition to purified philosophy and purified theology as turning upon the identity of will and intellect and upon the rejection of certain distinctions will be crucial in the ensuing treatment of the relation between substance and mode in Spinoza.

Before turning to that case and its complications, I want to turn briefly to the question: why did Spinoza present the relation between theology and philosophy in the TTP in a way that, as we can see from the point of view of the *Ethics* and of the late annotation to the TTP, is incorrect or at least misleading? In the TTP, theology and philosophy are said to be distinct and independent, whereas in the *Ethics* (with some difference in terminology), they come to be united and, in some sense, the same.

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One answer is, of course, that in the TTP Spinoza was concerned with what might be called impure versions of theology and philosophy, versions of theology and philosophy that are either mired in the imaginative or the general or that are, more fundamentally, mired in distinctions that Spinoza rejects in the *Ethics*. Okay, but still we may ask: why did Spinoza rely on such distinctions in the TTP if he does not actually accept these distinctions? And here, at least part of the answer, I believe, is that in the TTP Spinoza is adapting his message to his audience and, in particular, to the kind of framework for understanding theology and philosophy that his opponents took for granted. That framework was one in which theology and philosophy were seen not only as distinct, but also as standing in a hierarchical relation with either theology or philosophy at the top. Within this dialectical context, one important, but less than maximally radical step to take against the prevailing opinion is to grant that there is a distinction between theology and philosophy, but to deny that there is any hierarchical relation between them, that is, to affirm that they are independent of one another. And that is precisely what Spinoza does in the TTP. On this understanding of the state of play between Spinoza and his opponents, when Spinoza comes to the *Ethics* in which he feels, perhaps, less fettered by prevailing views, he can break free more fully and reject not only the hierarchy between religion and theology, on the one hand, and philosophy, on the other, but also reject the distinction between them altogether. As we will now see, in the *Ethics* and in connection with the case of the relation between substance and modes, Spinoza is even more deeply radical in subverting ordinary ways of speaking and perhaps even his own way of speaking, not only in the TTP but also in the *Ethics* itself.

14.3 Mode and Substance

Just as the distinction between theology and philosophy is etched into the text (and subtitle) of the TTP, so too the distinction between substance and mode is etched into the text of the *Ethics* (and into other texts of Spinoza's). Indeed, unlike the distinction between theology and philosophy, the substance/mode distinction is, as we will see, inscribed into the very definitions of "substance" and of "mode".

Nevertheless, I want to argue now that despite the much-trumpeted distinction between substance and mode (with Spinoza himself doing much of the trumpeting), mode and substance, for Spinoza, are, in an important sense, *not* distinct, and instead they converge, are united, and are one and the same. I hasten to add that I am not offering here a general account of what Spinoza means by "united" and by "one and the same"[10]—an endeavour made even more difficult because Spinoza's

[10] I take such steps in my "Points of View and the Two-Fold Use of the Principle of Sufficient Reason" and "The Elusiveness of the One and the Many".

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use of the terms may not be completely consistent. Rather, my aim here is to take seriously the idea that, in at least one major strand in his thinking, Spinoza carries out some kind of stripping away of distinctions between mode and substance.

Thus, I see Spinoza as rejecting the distinction between substance and mode, just as he comes to reject the distinction between theology and philosophy, and just as he rejects the distinction between will and intellect. Further, as I will argue, to the extent that Spinoza rejects the distinction between substance and mode, he does so by omitting certain distinctions or negative elements from our original understanding of mode, just as the understanding of theology and philosophy was transformed through the omission of certain distinctions or negative elements. And in both cases, the appreciation of the union of (the convergence of, the lack of distinction between) substance and mode and the appreciation of the union of (etc.) theology and philosophy rests on a fundamental principle of Spinoza's system.

To see the shift that Spinoza's understanding of mode and of substance undergoes, I want to turn to the insights into the essence of a thing that Spinoza expresses in and around his doctrine of the conatus of each thing to persist or to persevere in existence. I will not here focus on the analysis and defence of this controversial claim of the universal striving for self-preservation. I have done that in other contexts, including, most recently in the paper, "Perseverance, Power and Eternity: Purely Positive Essence in Spinoza". Here I will be content instead to elicit the ways in which the conception of essence as purely positive is at work in the development of this doctrine. In this discussion of the conception of essence as purely positive, I will in particular draw on claims I've made in the paper I just mentioned.

First, consider Spinoza's E3p4 and its demonstration:

> No thing can be destroyed except through an external cause.
> Demonstration: This proposition is evident through itself. For the definition of any thing affirms, and does not deny, the thing's essence, or it posits the thing's essence, and does not take it away. So while we attend only to the thing itself, and not to external causes, we shall not be able to find anything in it which can destroy it. (C 1:498/G 2:145)

Here, Spinoza specifies that the essence of a thing cannot dictate the thing's destruction. For Spinoza, if a thing is destroyed, the thing is caused not to exist by something other than the essence of the thing. A thing's coming *not* to exist cannot be, for Spinoza, built into the essence of the thing: the thing's essence, as Spinoza says, affirms and does not deny its existence.

Spinoza goes on to identify the essence of a thing with its conatus or striving or tendency to persist (E3p7). He then says that this striving or essence of each thing "by which each thing strives to persevere in its being involves no finite time, but an indefinite time" (E3p8; C 1:499/G 2:147). The essence of a thing not only cannot

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dictate that it goes out of existence, it cannot dictate that it goes out of existence at a specific time or exists for a certain duration. Again, no limit to a thing's existence is built into its essence.

Further, each thing, as far as its essence is concerned, not only has a tendency to persist, but also has a tendency to increase indefinitely in power of acting. Indefinite increase is built into the essence of a thing. Such a view can be elicited from Spinoza's claim in E3p12, "The mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the body's power of acting", as I have explained in "Perseverance, Power, and Eternity". There I also argue that this claim has general import and applies not just to human minds, but to things in general.

These three passages indicate that, for Spinoza, at least in the development of his conatus doctrine, the essence of a thing is purely positive: it contains no limitation, no specification that the existence of the thing (or its duration or its increase in power) is to go this far and no further. The thing's existence, duration, and increase in power will certainly be limited, but for Spinoza this is always because of factors external to the essence of the thing. Of course, you might say that these passages from early in Part 3 of the *Ethics* show that certain limitations and negations cannot be built into the essence of a thing, but they do not show that the definition or essence of a thing is completely without limitations or negations of any kind. Perhaps this is so, but if some limitations or negations are legitimately contained in the definition and others are not, then what is the basis for this distinction between the legitimate negations or limitations and the illegitimate ones? Because I think that there is no good answer to this question, I think that the passages from the beginning of Part 3 support the general claim that essence is purely positive.

Further, at the beginning of the *Ethics*, this conception of essence as purely positive is explicitly at work in the definition of God and its explication where Spinoza says when speaking of an absolutely infinite being, "whatever expresses essence and involves no negation pertains to its essence". Here Spinoza says that the essence of God (as expressed by the definition of God) contains no negation, that is, is purely positive.

Before we consider a conflict between another of Spinoza's definitions and the principle that essence is purely positive, I would like to ask: why would Spinoza accept such a principle? I think that Spinoza's ultimate basis is the same as his reason for accepting the principle that the will and intellect are one and the same, namely, the PSR. For Spinoza, just as there could be nothing in virtue of which the will would be distinct from the intellect—that is, there could be no explanation of their non-identity—so too there could be nothing in virtue of which a negative element could be contained in the essence of a thing. As with the case of the identity of will and intellect, unfortunately I do not have the space here to explore the rationalist basis of the principle that the essence of a thing is purely positive.[11]

[11] For more discussion, see my paper, "Rationalism Run Amok", especially the section, "Whose Affect Is It Anyway?", and my paper, "Violations of the Principle of Sufficient Reason in Leibniz and Spinoza".

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In order to see the conflict this principle gets into, let's turn to the conception of a particular thing, *x*. *x* is, as we might say in Spinozistic terms, a mode, that is, a mode of substance. But I am going to speak also of *x* as simply a thing—as Spinoza himself often does.

Given the purely positive essence principle, the essence of *x* must contain no negation, no distinctions, no other-ness. What then is the content—that is, the purely positive content—of the essence of *x*? A problem in answering this question arises once we bring in the fact that this thing, *x*, is a mode. A mode is defined as that which is in another and is conceived through another (E1def5). As Spinoza makes clear, this other which a mode is in and conceived through is the substance of which the mode is a mode.

Spinoza specifies that his definitions in general express the essence of the thing defined.[12] Thus, given that *x* is essentially a mode, it is part of the essence of *x* that *x* is in *another* and is conceived through *another*, that is, it is part of *x*'s essence to be in and conceived through something that is *not* itself. The definition of *x* is thus that *x* is in substance which is other than *x*. However, since, according to the purely positive essence principle, no essence of a thing can legitimately contain anything negative, it turns out that the genuine content—the positive content—of the definition of *x* must omit the "other". So, if we take the definition, "*x* is in substance which is other than *x*", and omit the negative element, omit the "other", what is left is simply the content "is in substance" or "is in God" which is the same as or equivalent to the content of the definitions of substance and of God which are defined as being in themselves. This concept, the concept of God, is, as E1def6 and its explication make clear, purely positive. So, the positive aspect of the essence of *x* is thus just the content "is in substance" or "is in God", and, purged of its illegitimate other-ness, the concept of *x* is, in effect, just the concept of God.

In this way, we move from the conception of *x* as limited, as in another, to a conception of *x* as simply God. Whatever was positive or legitimate in the conception of *x* is—once we remove the negative elements—the same as the concept of God. The concept of *x*—when purified—is just the concept of God and, in this light, *x* can be seen as in some way united with, in some way converging with, and perhaps in some way even one and the same as God. Given the principle that essence is purely positive, there is no other way to coherently conceive of *x*. Here, just as we saw in the case of theology and philosophy, the concept of *x*—when *x* is conceived as God—comes into its own.

Just as Spinoza moved from a conception of theology as different from philosophy, as imaginative, as concerned with action and *not* thought, to a conception of theology as united with philosophy, as rational in the robust sense of *ratio*, and as concerned with active thought or thoughtful action, so too, by applying Spinoza's principle that the essence of a thing is purely positive, we can move from

[12] See, e.g., E3p4dem already quoted and E1p8s2, G 2:50.

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a conception of *x* as in another thing, that is, in God, to a conception of *x* as simply God. This is the purified concept of *x* at which we arrive by applying the principle that essence is purely positive, just as Spinoza arrived at a purified conception of theology and of philosophy by applying the principle that will and intellect are one and the same.

In each case—the case of *x*, the mode, and the case of theology and philosophy—we move to a purified conception by shedding the negative elements, the elements of distinction and of one thing's *not* being another, in the original conception of mode or of theology and philosophy. In each case this purification proceeds in virtue of a principle—that will and intellect are one and the same or that essence is purely positive—that is itself grounded in the PSR.

So just as obedience makes a transition into rational love, and just as theology and philosophy are ultimately united, or convergent, or in some sense the same, so too are *x*—a "mode"—and God united, convergent, or in some sense the same. And before I consider the chorus of objections that I know are coming my way, I want to point out and pointedly so that Spinoza *early* and *often* says *precisely* this kind of thing, that is, he says that a mode, *x*, and God are united and are in some sense the same.

Thus, consider what, in his early *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza says is the highest good, namely, "the knowledge of the union that the mind has with the whole of nature" (Section 13, "*cognitionem unionis, quam mens cum totâ Naturâ habet*"; C 1:11/G 2:8). If the whole of nature is God (as Spinoza sometimes says), then Spinoza's point here is that the mind is united to God.

Next, consider a few passages in a similar spirit from another early work, the *Short Treatise*: "the most perfect man is the one who unites [*vereenigt*] with the most perfect being, God" (KV 2.4, G 1:61).

Consider also Spinoza's similar claim in KV 2.22:

> if we come to know God in this way [through the clearest knowledge], then we must necessarily unite [*vereenigen*] with him, for he cannot manifest himself, or be known by us, as anything but the most magnificent and best of all. As we have already said, our blessedness consists only in this union with him. (C 1:139/G 1:100)

In a similar vein, note that Spinoza characterizes love as a union with an object "such that the lover and the loved come to be one and the same thing [*een en de zelfde*], or to form a whole together [*zamen een geheel maaken*]" (KV 2.5, C 1:105-06/G 1:63). Soon after, Spinoza specifies that those who use the intellect well love God (KV 2.5, G 1:64–65). It follows that one who loves God enjoys a union with God and that God and that individual are one and the same.

These three passages from the KV indicate that the union with God is an achievement and is not, as it were, automatic. The achievement seems to go along

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with a movement to the third kind of knowledge that, as we have seen, is at work in the movement towards the unification of theology and philosophy.

Shortly afterwards in the KV, Spinoza makes a more catholic claim about union with God: "since the whole of nature is one unique substance, whose essence is infinite, all things are united [*vereenigt*] through nature, and united [*vereenigt*] into one [being], viz. God" (KV 2.22, G 1:101).

Next, consider a couple of passages from the *Ethics* that I've discussed elsewhere (in "Perseverance, Power, and Eternity" from which the rest of this paragraph and the next one are adapted). These passages suggest that each thing, *x*, including each mode, is in some way the same as God. Thus, in E2p44c2, Spinoza says, "It is of the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain aspect of eternity". In the demonstration of this corollary, Spinoza says: "this necessity of things is the very necessity of God's eternal nature" (G 2:126). One way to read this passage is as saying that the necessity of a given mode, *x*, is the necessity of God's nature. Given the association in Spinoza between existence and necessity,[13] Spinoza can be read as saying that the existence of a mode just is the existence of God, and thus that a particular mode just is God.

Similarly, check out E5p36, a claim on the basis of which Spinoza goes on to highlight in E5p36s, as we have seen, the active nature of the third kind of knowledge. Spinoza says in E5p36:

> The mind's intellectual love of God is the very love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human mind's essence, considered under an aspect of eternity. (C 1:612/G 2:302)

Spinoza seems to be saying here that the love that I have for God—to the extent that it is real or considered positively or without limitations—is just God's love of himself. I am making the more general point that my *existence*—to the extent that it is real—just is God's existence. In both cases, a feature that might seem to be proper to me—*my* love of God, *my* existence—turns out to be, when considered positively, really a feature of God. The specific claim Spinoza makes about intellectual love in E5p36 is an indication that Spinoza is committed to—and perhaps sees himself as committed to—the general thesis that each thing is just God. I will return to the significance of Spinoza's view that God loves himself in the next section.

Also, and perhaps even more significantly, there are a couple of telling passages in E1p15s. First, Spinoza says rather famously and rather cryptically:

> if we attend to quantity as it is in the imagination, which we do often and more easily, it will be found to be finite, divisible, and composed of parts; but if we

[13] See, e.g., E1def8: "By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing" (C 1:409/G 2:46).

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> attend to it as it is in the intellect, and conceive it insofar as it is a substance, which happens [NS: seldom and] with great difficulty, then . . . it will be found to be infinite, unique, and indivisible. (C 1:424/G 2:59)

There is a lot going on in this passage, but I would like to highlight an aspect of Spinoza's argument here, namely, that quantity can be considered as a substance or as something finite. This latter way of conceiving quantity is certainly conceiving it as a mode (only modes are finite). So, the same thing, quantity, can be considered either as a substance or as a mode. Of course, the notion of the same here would need to be unpacked, and, also of course, there is, as Margaret Wilson, puts it, a "thicket of intensionality" to be whacked through here,[14] but on the face of it, in this passage Spinoza says that something that is a mode can be considered as a substance. Again, this indicates that a mode and a substance are in some sense the same.

Another passage in 1p15s, soon after the one that I just quoted, makes this conclusion even more clear. Spinoza makes the point in terms of the example of water:

> we conceive that water is divided and its parts are separated from one another—insofar as it is water, but not insofar as it is corporeal substance. For insofar as it is substance, it is neither separated nor divided. Again, water, insofar as it is water, is generated and corrupted, but insofar as it is substance, it is neither generated nor corrupted. (C 1:424/G 2:59–60)

Here Spinoza explicitly says that water—which, for Spinoza, is certainly a mode—can be conceived as water and also can be conceived as substance. That is, the very same thing that can be conceived as water, a mode, can also be conceived as a substance. Here again, a thing that is a mode seems to be, in some way, the same as a substance.

A final strand of evidence for the view that that substance and mode are somehow unified or the same comes from reflection on Spinoza's notion of number, and from his intriguing claim that God is called "one" only improperly (Letter 50; CM 1.6). I cannot here go into the complexities of this account,[15] but I would like to point out an implication of Spinoza's use of this notion of one in the improper sense, namely, that a mode of substance and the substance itself are many—that is, more than one—only in an improper sense. Again, the many-ness and other-ness, do not have a foothold in the world and, at the very least, a thing that is a mode and the substance are, in some sense, not many.

[14] Wilson, "Review of Thomas Carson Mark, *Spinoza's Theory of Truth*." See also, Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind-Body Problem in Spinoza*, Chapters 7 and 8.

[15] For a full treatment, see my paper, "The Elusiveness of the One and the Many".

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14.4 The Greatest Love of All

Still, even with all this textual support of various kinds for the view that substance and mode—like theology and philosophy—are in the end united or the same, there will be enormous resistance to this view, for in affirming, as I see Spinoza as doing, that substance and mode are the same, Spinoza is contradicting not just an ancillary or incidental claim about modes and their relation to substance, rather, he seems to be contradicting the very definition of mode. As I mentioned, the distinction between substance and mode not only is etched into the text of the *Ethics*, it is also etched into the text at the fundamental level of definitions.

The substance/mode case may be in this respect different from the theology/philosophy case, for while the ultimate union or convergence of theology and philosophy in the *Ethics* may be in tension with some things Spinoza says in the TTP, his claims in the *Ethics* do not seem to contradict his definitions either of theology or of philosophy. The primary features of theology and of philosophy remain the same, with philosophy's goal being truth and theology's goal being obedience (obedience that, as we saw, undergoes a transition into rational love). No definition need be undermined by the breaking down of barriers between theology and philosophy. By contrast, if Spinoza really does see substance and mode as the same or not distinct, he would seem to be going against the very definition of mode which pronounces modes to be other than substance. So, while the purification of theology and philosophy may not involve Spinoza in any contradiction of the definitions of the two, the purification of mode does seem to violate the definition of mode.

A related worry is this: the convergence of theology and philosophy in the *Ethics* may seem surprising in light of their sharp separation in the TTP, but this development of Spinoza's views may be tolerable because the separation of theology and philosophy and their convergence take place in two works with different methodologies and motivations. However, the change from seeing substance as other than modes to seeing modes and substance as united, as the same, takes place, not just across works but within a single work, the *Ethics*. Can we really countenance such a difference in view (modes are other than substance/modes are the same as substance) in a single work with, it seems, a single methodology and motivation?

I will take up these challenges in turn.

The first question is: how can Spinoza go against his own definition of mode when he says that mode and substance are united or the same? This challenge may seem compelling or even insuperable, until we reflect on the fact that, in other cases, Spinoza has no qualms about going against—even explicitly—his own definitions. Thus, consider the case of the affect love which Spinoza defines as "joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause" (E3daVI; see also E3p13s). Joy, of course, Spinoza defines as "a man's passage from a lesser to a greater perfection" (E3daII; see also E3p11s).

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On the basis of these definitions, Spinoza quite reasonably infers that, because God can undergo no passage from one level of activity to another, God is incapable of loving anything (or, for that matter, hating anything). Thus, Spinoza says:

> God can pass neither to a greater nor a lesser perfection (by E1p20c2); hence (by E3da2-3) he is not affected with any affect of joy or sadness. (E5p17dem; C 1:604/ G 2:291)

And he drives the point home in E5p17c: "Strictly speaking, God loves no one, and hates no one [*Deus propriè loquendo neminem amat, neque odio habet*]".

But a mere nineteen propositions later, we find Spinoza speaking of the intellectual love "by which God loves himself" (E5p36). He goes on to speak of God's love not only of himself, but also of men or human beings (E5p36c).

I do not want to focus here on the reasoning that leads to these claims. Instead, I want to point out, first, that in saying that God loves, Spinoza is going against his definition of love from Part Three of the *Ethics*, and, second, that the fact that Spinoza is aware that he is doing so seems to be the reason he appended a "strictly speaking" to his claim in E5p17c that God loves no one and hates no one. Although Spinoza recognizes that God's loving violates Spinoza's definition of love, Spinoza is not willing to withhold the term "love" from God. It seems that, for Spinoza, attributing love to God captures something important about God and about love. Indeed, Spinoza goes on to say in E5p37 that God's intellectual love (which is the same as our intellectual love of God) is so powerful that, "There is nothing in nature which is contrary to this intellectual love, or which can take it away".

With Spinoza's invocation of this most powerful form of love—God's love of God—the concept of love seems to have, as it were, come into its own, seems to have been perfected. The concept of love that Spinoza now seems to be operating with is no longer joy accompanied by the idea of an external cause, but, perhaps, is simply joy accompanied by the idea of a cause.

Similarly, in order to attribute joy to God who undergoes no transition, the concept of joy with which Spinoza now seems to be operating is no longer a thing's (a mind's or a human being's) passage to a greater perfection, but rather joy simply as a thing's perfection. Similarly, if the love that God has is called an affect, then affect would no longer be defined in terms of increase or decrease in power of acting (as in E3def3), but rather in terms of power of acting simpliciter. In the case of joy and affect at least, Spinoza does not explicitly call attention to this shift in his understanding of these definitions, but the shift does take place.

With these revisions of the definitions of love, joy, and affect, these definitions are explicitly or implicitly purified in the way that, as I said earlier, the definitions of mode and the characterization of theology and philosophy are purified by the removal of negative elements. From the original definition of love, the mention of an *external* cause, that is, a cause *other* than the lover in question, is excised,

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and the mention of *passage*—the movement from one state to *another*—is likewise excised. What we have left is a pure definition of love, that is, love now defined as something purely positive. This new version of the definition is in keeping with Spinoza's principle that the essence of things must be purely positive. Similar points apply to the (here implicit) shift in Spinoza's definitions of joy and affect.

I want to consider another shift, another revision of Spinoza's own words that occurs in the same stretch of text. After saying in E5p37 that nothing can destroy the intellectual love of God, Spinoza issues an important and overlooked clarification in E5p37s. He recognizes that his claim in E5p37 may seem to go against the axiom of Part Four which says that "[t]here is no singular thing [. . .] than which there is not another more powerful and stronger" (C 1:547/G 2:210). In E5p37s, Spinoza offers this way of spelling out the axiom of Part Four in light of E5p37:

> E4ax concerns singular things insofar as they are considered in relation to a certain time and place. I believe no one doubts this. (C 1:613/G 2:304)

It seems that Spinoza—in offering this clarification—is saying that although singular things can be considered in relation to a certain time and place, they can also be considered *not* in relation to a certain time and place.[16] But notice that in opening up this possibility of a singular thing not considered in this restrictive manner, Spinoza is going against his own definition of singular thing in Part Two of the *Ethics*:

> By singular things I understand things that are finite and have a determinate existence. (E2def7; C 1:447/G 2:85)

The relation to a certain time and place seems to be built into the definition of a singular thing. Thus, in E5p37s, Spinoza is not only clarifying the application of E4ax, but he is also, though less explicitly so, revising his definition of singular thing by removing the mention of finiteness and determinate existence. The revised definition of singular thing then would be perhaps simply: a thing that exists. Once again, Spinoza violates a previous definition and ascends, as it were, to a revised definition, purified of any negative elements. Here we have a purely positive conception of a singular thing.

In the light of these—sometimes explicit, sometimes not explicit—revisions of definitions in the cases of love, joy, affect, and singular thing, we can take seriously the view that when Spinoza goes against the definition of mode as other

[16] Compare this reading of 5p37s and 4ax with Spinoza's claim in 5p29s where he speaks of two ways to conceive of things as actual: "We conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them to exist in relation to a certain time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature."

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than substance, he is revising and purifying the definition of mode by removing the negative elements. Instead of thinking of a mode as in another, we now see it—when we move to the purified concept—not as a thing that is in another and conceived through another, but simply as a thing that is in (something) and conceived. Spinoza is here stretching the concept of mode beyond the limits he himself imposed on this concept. But, as in the other cases, this need not worry Spinoza. He seems quite willing to go against, violate, and revise his own definitions in order to arrive at a purified, negation-less concept. In the case of the definition of mode, this move is in the service of his view that modes and substance are united and, indeed, the same, just as theology and philosophy ultimately are also united and the same for Spinoza.

So, my answer to the challenge that, on my account of the substance/mode relation, Spinoza violates one of his own definitions is this: yes, I am saying that Spinoza does violate his own definition, but why should this matter? He does this kind of thing all the time. I repeat: he does this kind of thing all the time. And he seems happy to do this precisely because of his conception of the essence of things as purely positive.

Let's turn now to the second challenge I raised: can we really countenance such a shift within a single work, the *Ethics*, a shift from saying that modes are other than substance to saying that modes are not other than substance? This would be sharply different from the shift in the relation between theology and philosophy which largely occurs across two works of quite different kinds, the TTP and the *Ethics*.

Here it is helpful to see Spinoza in the *Ethics* as adopting a certain terminology of "substance" and "mode" and as defining these terms in a certain way because that terminology and those definitions were more or less in keeping with definitions prevailing among his philosophical readers and in at least some of the philosophical traditions which Spinoza received. Spinoza, thus, follows the old adage: Dance with the one who brung ya. And so he dances with the one who brung him—he employs terms and definitions recognizable to his audience. But dancing with these terms and definitions does not mean that Spinoza is shackled to the form of the definitions he initially presented. He need not shy away from stretching, adapting, and even contradicting these definitions—even within the confines of a single text—if that is what must be done in order to get across the point he wants to get across. And, of course, the point is that essence is purely positive and that any thing, *x*, is united with and the same as God. To say that once Spinoza starts with a certain definition—perhaps in order to accommodate the understanding of one's audience—he is bound to this initial formulation no matter what is to treat Spinoza's texts more rigidly than he himself does. It is to stand in the way of Spinoza's developing his own system, refining it, and, yes, purifying it as he takes the reader on this journey, as he dances with—and perhaps improves—the one that brung him.

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Of course, it would have been helpful to the reader for Spinoza to call attention more explicitly to the shift to which he's subjecting the definition of mode (just as he explicitly calls attention to such a shift in some of the other cases I examined). However, he does, as I noted, make this shift at least implicitly in a number of passages including passages in the *Ethics*, and his failure to do so more explicitly may be seen as evidence of the powerful hold that ordinary ways of deploying philosophical language have, even on Spinoza.

From the point of view offered by my interpretation, Spinoza at least implicitly regards some of the initial claims of the *Ethics* as wrong or misleading.[17] However, Spinoza as I interpret him also sees these claims as a, perhaps necessary, springboard that enables him and his readers to begin to articulate a view—infused with the third kind of knowledge—of a thing as united with or the same as God. To see Spinoza as chained to certain of his original definitions and to their negativity is, I would argue, to see him as no better than those who see ideas as mute pictures on a tablet or, indeed, as no better than those biblical interpreters whom he excoriates for subordinating reason to "dead letters".[18]

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[17] Here, despite my general agreement with the criticisms of Savan in Lærke, "Spinoza's Language", I have some sympathy for Savan's reading in "Spinoza and Language".

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